

Final Report

83-22

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## Secondary Education Credentials: A Military Enlistment Policy Dilemma

Janice H. Laurence

HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH ORGANIZATION  
1100 South Washington Street • Alexandria, Virginia 22314-4499

November 1983

Prepared for:

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(Manpower, Reserve Affairs, & Logistics)

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM															
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. <b>AD-A135994</b>	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER															
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) <b>SECONDARY EDUCATION CREDENTIALS: A MILITARY ENLISTMENT POLICY DILEMMA</b>		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED <b>Final Report</b>															
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER <b>FR-PRD-83-22</b>															
7. AUTHOR(s) <b>Janice H. Laurence</b>		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) <b>MDA903-82-C-0229</b>															
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS <b>Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) 1100 South Washington Street Alexandria, Virginia 22314</b>		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS															
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS <b>Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Personnel &amp; Force Management) Washington, DC 20301</b>		12. REPORT DATE <b>November 1983</b>															
		12. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>51</b>															
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		13. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) <b>Unclassified</b>															
		13a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE															
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)  <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.</b>																	
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)																	
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES																	
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)																	
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>education standards</td> <td>private school</td> <td>correspondence school</td> </tr> <tr> <td>educational enlistment policy</td> <td>nonaccredited schools</td> <td>equivalency certificates</td> </tr> <tr> <td>secondary education credentials</td> <td>alternative diplomas</td> <td>external diplomas</td> </tr> <tr> <td>high school diploma</td> <td>competency testing</td> <td>home education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>public school</td> <td>adult education</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			education standards	private school	correspondence school	educational enlistment policy	nonaccredited schools	equivalency certificates	secondary education credentials	alternative diplomas	external diplomas	high school diploma	competency testing	home education	public school	adult education	
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tificates that are being granted at the secondary school level. In addition to the traditional diploma, there are certificates of attendance, completion, or similar credentials issued in lieu of a diploma in schools which engage in competency testing. There are other types of high school programs or alternative paths to the diplomas available to students within public and private high schools. Distinctions can be made between state recognized and/or accredited and unaccredited high schools. Adult education programs provide yet another means by which individuals can earn a high school credential. Correspondence school diplomas and certificates represent another dimension in the education spectrum.

The description of these programs and credentials is provided as an aid in delineating the types of educational experiences relevant to setting military enlistment standards. Thus, this report is intended as a reference for military enlistment policy makers and recruiting services.

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## **Secondary Education Credentials: A Military Enlistment Policy Dilemma**

**Janice H. Laurence**

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## Foreword

To gain entry into the Military Services, United States citizens of appropriate age must be certified physically, medically, and morally fit; they must also possess sufficient aptitude to absorb training. Since the late 1960s, the Services have also considered an applicant's educational level in conjunction with aptitude, in making enlistment decisions. Specifically, all four Services require non-high school graduates and General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency holders to attain higher enlistment aptitude test scores than high school graduates--the preferred group of applicants. This practice is based upon in-service performance, primarily, attrition differences between these educational groups. Failure to successfully complete the first term of Service is approximately twice as likely among non-graduates as it is among graduates. Empirical evidence also shows that persons with GED credentials perform more like nongraduates than graduates in terms of attrition.

While the diploma is known to predict successful first-term behavior, just why this relationship holds is not known. Not only are data lacking on which background variables and/or individual characteristics associated with high school graduation increase a recruit's chances of performing well, but empirical evidence linking alternative credentials to attrition is practically nonexistent as well. Research shows only that there are performance differences among rather broad and ill-defined educational categories, that is, among individuals labeled high school diploma graduates, GED high school equivalency credential holders, and non-high school graduates.

In light of the multitude of secondary school credentials now offered, Service educational standards seem overly generalized and in need of improvement. To address these issues (as well as issues arising in the area of moral standards) the Directorate for Accession Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs, & Logistics) contracted with

the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) to review existing educational and moral standards and to collect further information which would serve as an empirical foundation on which to base improved enlistment standards.

As part of this contract, entitled "Evaluation and Improvement of Educational and Moral Standards for Entry Into the Armed Forces", HumRRO reviewed the kinds of secondary education credentials currently awarded in the U.S. This report summarizes the findings of that review, and provides an indication of the large numbers of education credentials which the Services must classify for enlistment purposes. Additional reports issued as part of the Standards project will deal with the Services' current educational enlistment standards and the empirical evidence collected in this project on the military performance of individuals with various types of nontraditional credentials. Thus, the present report is intended as a reference for military enlistment policymakers and recruiting services. It describes many of the kinds of credentials now offered in the U.S. and the ways in which those credentials may be earned. This report does not attempt to make any policy recommendations or to describe existing enlistment policies.

Many individuals contributed to this report. Dr. W. S. Sellman, Deputy Director, Accession Policy, within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs, & Logistics) served as Technical Monitor for the Standards project and provided valuable guidance, comments, and suggestions with respect to this report. The support within HumRRO's Manpower Analysis Program -- under the management of Dr. Brian K. Waters -- proved invaluable. The efforts of Ms. Linda S. Perelman, Research Associate, were indefatigable. She assisted in locating sources and collecting information on educational credentials as well providing comments on the draft report. Dr. Barbara Means, Senior Scientist, served as Project Director and contributed excellent editorial recommendations. Thanks are also extended to Ms. Elizabeth F. Schneider, Research Assistant, for her attention to detail, as she

tabulated materials gathered from library sources and checked them for accuracy. The assistance of Ms. Dana Doran is also appreciated, particularly for her word processing skills.

In addition to Dr. W. S. Sellman, other individuals external to HumRRO gave their time in reading and commenting on the draft report. Greatly appreciated are the suggestions of Dr. Mark J. Eitelberg, Adjunct Professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, and Mr. Henry A. Spille, Director of the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education.

## Summary

This report describes various paths to the high school diploma and many types of secondary school credentials which today's youth may possess. Specifically the discussion first focuses on the traditional diploma whether earned from a public, private, or nonaccredited high school. Next competency testing and its implications are discussed. Among the topics considered here are the alternative diplomas and "substitute" credentials offered to individuals who do not meet all graduation requirements. Third, nontraditional credentials and diploma programs are presented. Included among such credentials are adult education diplomas, external diplomas, correspondence diplomas, home education diplomas, and high school equivalency certificates.

The proliferation of credentials in the U.S. poses problems in the realm of education standards for military enlistment. The final section of this report discusses the dilemma faced by military enlistment policymakers with regard to education standards and the many credentials that must be taken into consideration in setting them.



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## Background

Since the days of Thomas Jefferson, the United States has been committed to free, public education. This national concern was translated into a state function to be implemented at the local school district level. By 1918, every state had enacted compulsory school attendance laws (Atkinson & Maleska, 1962). Since that time, tremendous growth has occurred in the formal educational system, particularly up through the 1960s. In 1950, for example, some 76 of every 100 youth age 14 to 17 were enrolled in public and private secondary schools. By 1972 the comparable figure was 93 out of every 100 (Task Force on Secondary Schools in a Changing Society, 1975). This increase in the universality of secondary education suggests that the characteristics of the secondary school population have changed as well.

The last 25 years have witnessed several trends in American education, with consequent changes in the type of educational experiences most students have received. Following the Russian launching of Sputnik in 1957, there was a furor over the need to stress mathematics and scientific training, with an emphasis on abstract or conceptual learning (the new math, etc.). During the 1960s the pendulum swung toward socially relevant courses and affective education, with increased emphasis on the needs of the student and diminished emphasis on basic skills and lockstep curricula. Declining standardized aptitude and achievement test scores led to a massive erosion of public confidence in education in the early 1970s (Neill, 1978). There was great concern that functionally illiterate students were receiving high school diplomas, thus rendering the diploma meaningless. Such concerns gave impetus to the back-to-basics curricula and to minimum competency testing--two movements which continued to grow throughout the 1970s. More recently, the National Commission

on Excellence in Education (1983) pointed to evidence of a continuing decline in educational achievement and called for an emphasis on excellence rather than just minimum competency and a curricular focus on "the new basics" (English, mathematics, science, social studies, and computer science). These various changes in the educational system have left their mark on education today in terms of its governmental control, curricula, and implementation.

### **Secondary School Credentials and Experiences of Today**

With public education controlled at the state rather than the federal level, and functioning more or less as local district or even individual school ventures, it is difficult to state what "the" diploma signifies. Diploma granting programs differ in their curricula and in their criteria for graduation.

Not only are there many alternative paths (with a variety of required tasks) to the traditional diploma, but there are variations in the types of secondary school level credentials issued as well. Today there exist different forms of the high school diploma, a variety of "substitute" credentials issued to students in lieu of a diploma, and high school equivalency certificates for individuals seeking documentation subsequent to their premature (i.e., prior to graduation) departure from school.

The Military Services have a vital interest in the products of today's secondary schools--diploma holders. For the Services, the diploma has come to signify ability to adapt to the military organization. While DoD uses test scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery as its primary aptitude index, the high school credential is relied upon to predict acceptable in-Service behavior and successful completion of the first term of duty.

Exactly what aspects of the educational experience account for the diploma's predictive power are not known. So far, empirical evidence tells us only that diploma holders (as defined by the Services for enlistment purposes) are less likely on the average, to leave service prematurely than either persons with a GED credential or those labeled non-high school graduates. Evidence on adaptability and attrition is practically non-existent for holders of credentials other than these.

In light of the substantial changes that have occurred in the secondary school systems of this country over the years and the different types of credentials that exist today, the classification of individuals as high school graduates or nongraduates has become problematic. At present, there is no comprehensive or Service-common definition of the circumstances or credentials that allow military applicants to be labeled high school graduates and thus to be preferred for enlistment. This report discusses both many of the paths to the "traditional" diploma and several of the alternative credentials and certificates that are being granted at the secondary school level. The description of these programs and credentials is provided as an aid in delineating the types of educational experiences relevant to setting military enlistment standards. However, an evaluation of the quality of educational experiences provided by these programs is beyond the scope of this report.

### **Sources of Information**

Information regarding the types of, and requirements for, secondary school credentials was obtained from a variety of sources. Correspondence with GED administrators from each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia proved invaluable. Not only did these individuals provide documentation of procedures for issuing the GED high school equivalency certificate, but in

many cases they shared their knowledge of additional credentials or requirements for the diploma in their states. Furthermore, many of the administrators provided the names of contacts within individual state departments of education from whom additional information was obtained.

Other sources of information aside from periodicals and other literature include:

- American Council on Education
- U.S. Department of Education
- Education Commission of the States
- National Home Study Council
- National Center for Education Statistics
- National Institute of Education
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Accelerated Christian Education

The descriptions of diplomas, credentials, certificates and programs which follow are based on compilations or generalizations derived from the varied materials received from the above sources.

## The Traditional Diploma

Military enlistment policy analysts have long suspected that it is not the high school diploma per se, or solely the curriculum, that relates to military adaptability. Certainly there are a variety of experiences that go into secondary education, culminating with the earning of a high school diploma. In the traditional school environment, there are rules to be followed, activities or clubs to join, and other students and teachers to interact with. In addition to making students literate in language, mathematics, science, and history, schools may teach students how to drive, how to act in various social situations, and the "art" of being well-groomed. They may also impart a talent for absorbing education and establish attitudes towards work.

Secondary schools often stress the importance of providing planned experience to high school students. The high school environment offers the opportunity to study and work in a group environment. "The give and take of discussion, the response of others to one's actions, the completion of common tasks, the assumption of responsibility, and participation in a collective enterprise," writes the National Association of Secondary School Principals, "all contribute significantly to a social and intellectual preparedness for adulthood" (Task Force on Secondary Schools in a Changing Society, 1975). These behaviors are established in the repertoire of most high school students; and those students who fail to follow through, and quit high school, may display behavioral patterns lacking in mature personal commitment.

## Public Schools

In the 1982-83 school year there were 15,626 operating public school districts and 2,643,349 public high school graduates in the United States (Gewirtz, 1983). Most of these students earned their diplomas through the traditional classroom approach, consisting of a planned, four-year sequence of courses taught by state-certified teachers. Teenage students progress through courses (usually in lockstep fashion) along with their peers toward the completion of requirements for the diploma. Although specific prerequisites for the traditional diploma vary from state to state, school district to school district, and school to school, these requirements are usually expressed in terms of attendance, credits, and "competencies."

The Carnegie unit system is the most commonly used standard of accomplishment in the nation's secondary schools. A Carnegie or credit unit is usually defined as one high school course, which meets for a predetermined number of hours over the school year (typically nine months or 180 days). Thus, a unit of credit is basically a quantitative time-spent measure of high school instruction. A student who regularly attends and passes a course earns one Carnegie unit and, implicitly, is deemed competent in that subject.

The diploma is based on earning at least a minimum number of credit units overall as well as obtaining credits in particular subject areas. Table 1 shows the credit unit requirements for high school graduation mandated by each state and indicates which states delegate the responsibility for setting minimum requirements to local school districts.

Most states provide only very general regulations regarding academic requirements and subjects to be taught. Local districts and schools determine



Table 1  
Credit Unit Requirements for Graduation  
from High School by Subject and State

State	Subject							Total
	English	Social Studies	Math	Science	PE/Health	Electives	Other	
Alabama	4	3	1	1	4	7		20
Alaska	1	1	1	1	1	Locally Determined		19
Arizona	3	2	1	1		8 1/2	1/2	16
Arkansas	4	1	One major of 3 units 3 minors of 2		Recommended 1		10	16
California				Locally Determined				
Colorado				Locally Determined				18
Connecticut				Locally Determined				
Delaware	4	3	1	1	1 1/2	7 1/2		18
District of Columbia	4	1 1/2	1	1	1 1/2	8 1/2		17 1/2
Florida				Locally Determined				
Georgia	3	1	1	1	2/3	10	3 1/3	20
Hawaii	4	4	2	2	1 1/2	6	1/2	20
Idaho	3 1/2	2	1	2	1 1/2	8		18
Illinois	3	1			Locally Determined			16
Indiana	3	2	1	1	1/2 / 1/2	8		16
Iowa	local	1 1/2	local	local	1	local	local	local
Kansas	4	2	1	1	1	8		17
Kentucky	3	2	2	2	1	8		18
Louisiana	4	2	3	2	2	8 1/2	1/2	22
Maine	4	1			Locally Determined			16
Maryland	4	3	2	2	1	8		20
Massachusetts		Locally Determined			1		Locally Determined	
Michigan	local	1/2			Locally Determined			
Minnesota	3	2			1	9		15
Mississippi	3	2 1/2	1	1		8 1/2		(Grades 10-12) 16
Missouri	1	1	1	1	1	11	4	20
Montana	4	1 1/2	2	1	1	6 1/2		(2 from English, Math, Soc. Studies or Science) 16
Nebraska				Locally Determined				16
Nevada	3	2	1	1	2 1/2	9 1/2		19
New Hampshire	4	2	1	1		8		16
New Jersey	4	2	2	1	4		1 1/2	
New Mexico	4	2	2	1	1	7	3	20
New York	4	3	1	1	1/2	6 1/2 Local Diploma 8 1/2 Regents Diploma		16 local 18 regents
North Carolina	4	2	1	2	1	6		18
North Dakota	3	3	1	2	1	7		17
Ohio	3	2	1	1	1	9		17
Oklahoma	4	1 1/2	1	1		10 1/2		18
Oregon	3	3 1/2	1	1	1/1	9	1 1/2	21
Pennsylvania	3	2	1	1				13
Rhode Island	4	1	1	1		9		(remainder a local option) 16
South Carolina	4	3	2	1	1	7		18
South Dakota	4	2	1	1		8		10
Tennessee	4	1 1/2	1	1	1 1/2	9		18
Texas	3	2 1/2	2	2	1 1/2 / 1/2	6 1/2		18
Utah	3	2	1	1	1 1/2	6 1/2		15
Vermont								(Grades 10-12)
Virginia	4	3	1	1	2	7		18
Washington	6	5	3	2	2		3	credits 45
West Virginia	4	3	1	1	1	7		(1 credit=60 hrs. instruction) 17
Wisconsin				Locally Determined				
Wyoming	local	1		Locally Determined				18

Source: Parrish, W.C. (1980). State-mandated graduation requirements. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals. (Updated with 1983 information.)

to a large extent the content of the curriculum, thus making for little uniformity in educational approach within as well as across states. In 32 states, responsibility for public schools rests with school districts, which are independent governmental units (Gewirtz, 1983). Some states do prescribe much of the school's curriculum and requirements, however. New York, for example, has state-wide syllabi and examinations in addition to determining the specific number of credits students must earn in various content areas. Other states controlling public education requirements are the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia. The remaining states have a mixed control situation.

While Table 1 provides relatively up-to-date (i.e., school year 1982-83) information, it will soon be outdated since graduation requirements are being reevaluated in many states today. The number of credit units needed to graduate is being increased and particular academic content areas (especially mathematics and science) in which these credits are to be distributed are being specified to a greater degree. These trends are, in part, a result of criticisms of secondary schools' curricular leniency raised by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. More specifically, the Commission expressed some of its concerns as follows:

Secondary school curricula have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria-style curriculum in which appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses... (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 18)

While it may take some time to notice the effect of increased graduation requirements and new basics curricula, the states are indeed in the process of mandating or at least recommending such changes.

Although there is considerable variation between and within states in the number of credit units required for graduation, specific course requirements, and method of determining competency or mastery level, there is a common core that can be considered the traditional high school education: Students spend three or four years in residence at a particular high school where they are given instruction as a group in general educational and elective courses. Generally, the high school core curriculum consists of courses in English, history, algebra and geometry, biology, physical science, and perhaps a foreign language. Physical education is also required although it does not always count toward meeting the required number of credit units. Electives are chosen from a variety of academic and nonacademic courses (e.g., music, art).

The distribution of core and elective courses defines the student's curriculum as academic, business, vocational, or general. Generally, an academic curriculum prepares a student for college; business and vocational curricula prepare for employment immediately following high school; and a general curriculum prepares a student for either option, though in a less rigorous manner. Nationally, approximately 38 percent of high school seniors participate in an academic curriculum, 37 percent in a general curriculum, and 25 percent in a vocational curriculum. When the U.S. is divided into four geographic regions, the Northeast region of the country shows the highest percentage of seniors participating in an academic curriculum at 51 percent, while only 32 percent of high school seniors in the South do so. The corresponding percentages for the Midwest and West are 35 and 36 percent, respectively. The highest rate of seniors taking vocational curriculum programs occurs in the South (28 percent); the lowest percentage is in the West (20 percent). More detailed information on curricula can be found in the 1983 edition of Condition

of Education (Plisko, 1983). At the end of high school, when all requirements are met, students leave their desks and receive a diploma signed by the school principal and usually, endorsed by the local superintendent and/or a representative of the state.

The above description of programs is a general one. More detailed national and state statistics on a variety of educational programs and experiences are available from the National Center for Education Statistics (e.g., participation in special programs, years of course work in selected courses, remedial and advanced placement education, disciplinary actions by enrollment, etc. can be found in Plisko, 1983).

Statements about the quality of public education (or any type of educational program) are beyond the scope of this report. The differences in requirements and practices among the states listed above were provided to communicate the fact that even among public school systems there is no completely uniform experience.

### Private Schools

In addition to the variety of public school programs described above, there are numerous private school programs through which a traditional diploma can be earned. In school year 1980-81, private schools accounted for approximately 20 percent of elementary and secondary schools, and roughly 10 percent of high school graduates had attended such schools (Plisko, 1983; Porter, 1982). Generally, these schools tend to have a smaller enrollment than public schools and lower pupil/teacher ratios. Table 2 shows the number of high school graduates by state, region, and census district along with the proportion of graduates from public and private schools. The Northeast region of the country has the highest percentage of non-public school graduates at 14

**Public and Private School Graduation Rates by  
U.S. Census Region, Division, and State**

<b>Region, Division and State</b>	<b>NUMBER OF High School Graduates</b>	<b>PERCENT PUBLIC School Graduates</b>	<b>PERCENT NON-PUBLIC School Graduates</b>	<b>PERCENT CHURCH RELATED School Graduates (of Non-Public Graduates)</b>
<b>NORTHEAST</b>	<b>701,986</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>81.1</b>
<u><b>New England</b></u>	<b>184,458</b>	<b>84.7</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>63.0</b>
Maine	17,280	89.4	10.6	28.8
New Hampshire	13,873	84.5	15.5	51.8
Vermont	7,684	88.0	12.0	31.8
Massachusetts	86,434	88.4	14.6	67.8
Rhode Island	12,966	83.8	16.2	92.0
Connecticut	46,251	81.5	18.5	62.2
<u><b>Middle Atlantic</b></u>	<b>517,528</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>88.2</b>
New York	236,430	86.3	13.7	87.4
New Jersey	108,607	87.1	12.9	88.0
Pennsylvania	172,491	84.9	15.1	89.4
<b>NORTH CENTRAL</b>	<b>870,135</b>	<b>90.9</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>92.6</b>
<u><b>East North Central</b></u>	<b>603,983</b>	<b>90.8</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>92.2</b>
Ohio	189,903	90.2	9.8	93.6
Indiana	78,502	93.2	6.8	86.3
Illinois	185,917	87.0	13.0	93.8
Michigan	137,379	90.5	9.5	90.0
Wisconsin	72,282	90.9	9.1	93.2
<u><b>West North Central</b></u>	<b>266,152</b>	<b>91.9</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>93.9</b>
Minnesota	69,311	93.6	6.4	92.4
Iowa	47,282	91.9	8.1	99.5
Missouri	69,636	89.4	10.6	91.5
North Dakota	10,642	93.3	6.7	92.6
Nebraska	25,252	88.7	11.3	97.8
Kansas	32,701	94.5	5.5	93.4
South Dakota	11,328	94.4	5.6	83.1
<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>937,318</b>	<b>89.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>73.6</b>
<u><b>South Atlantic</b></u>	<b>481,680</b>	<b>92.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>65.5</b>
Delaware	9,048	83.8	16.2	88.1
Maryland	61,121	88.8	11.2	84.1
District of Columbia	6,873	75.4	24.6	82.6
Virginia	71,094	93.7	6.3	64.4
West Virginia	24,219	96.5	3.5	88.6
North Carolina	73,643	96.2	3.8	46.1
South Carolina	41,390	93.5	6.5	42.5
Georgia	66,893	92.1	7.9	36.0
Florida	97,679	89.4	10.6	72.7
<u><b>East South Central</b></u>	<b>181,039</b>	<b>90.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>59.6</b>
Kentucky	48,593	90.4	9.6	86.2
Tennessee	88,071	90.5	9.5	67.6
Alabama	49,067	92.1	7.9	47.5
Mississippi	31,308	88.1	11.9	30.9
<u><b>West South Central</b></u>	<b>304,616</b>	<b>93.9</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>83.2</b>
Arkansas	30,166	96.3	3.7	74.2
Louisiana	88,572	83.3	16.7	80.2
Oklahoma	40,340	97.4	2.6	87.6
Texas	178,538	96.0	4.0	87.9
<b>WEST</b>	<b>537,868</b>	<b>92.8</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>80.7</b>
<u><b>Mountain</b></u>	<b>150,369</b>	<b>95.8</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>70.7</b>
Montana	12,588	96.4	3.6	89.2
Idaho	13,601	97.7	2.3	96.2
Wyoming	6,229	97.5	2.5	6.4
Colorado	38,864	95.2	4.8	74.5
New Mexico	19,388	98.2	1.8	50.2
Arizona	30,746	94.1	5.9	73.9
Utah	20,514	97.7	2.3	52.4
Nevada	8,772	96.4	3.4	99.7
<u><b>Pacific</b></u>	<b>387,499</b>	<b>91.6</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>82.6</b>
Washington	53,499	94.2	5.8	86.1
Oregon	31,623	94.7	5.3	89.1
California	282,888	91.2	8.8	84.3
Alaska	5,398	96.8	3.2	92.0
Hawaii	14,121	81.4	18.6	58.2

Source: Plisko, V.W. (Ed.). (1983). The condition of education. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

percent while the North Central region has the lowest percentage at 9 percent. The geographic differences in the proportion of high school graduates coming from private schools are probably most pronounced when comparisons are made on the state level. The range for the 1979-1980 school year was from 25 percent in the District of Columbia to 2 percent in both Idaho and Utah.

Among the nation's non-public schools, 82 percent are religiously affiliated. In terms of enrollment in private elementary and secondary schools, church-related schools account for 84 percent of the entire student body, as shown in Table 3. The percentage of non-public school graduates coming from church-related schools is shown by geographic region in Table 2. Of non-public school graduates the North Central region has the highest percentage from church-related schools (93 percent) and the South has the lowest proportion (74 percent). The proportion of private school graduates whose schools were church-related ranged from over 99 percent in Nevada to 29 percent in Maine.

Catholic schools account for the largest porportion (63 percent) of private school enrollment, followed by--though not closely--unaffiliated private schools at 16 percent. In 34 states, Catholic school enrollment accounts for over 50 percent of all private school enrollment. Among specifically known religiously affiliated schools, the Baptists rank second (6 percent), Lutherans third (5 percent) and Christians fourth (3 percent) in terms of enrollment. Information about additional church affiliations was available from fall 1980 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, showing the enrollment rankings for church related schools to be: (1) Catholic, (2) Baptist, (3) Lutheran, (4) Christian, (5) Jewish, (6) Seventh-Day Adventist, and (7) Episcopal (Grant & Eiden, 1982).

Table 3

Private Elementary/Secondary School Enrollment, by Affiliation and State: Fall 1980

State	Total Enrolled	Total	Not Affiliated	Religiously Affiliated					
				Total	Catholic	Baptist	Lutheran	Christian	Other
				Percentage Distribution					
Total 50 States and DC	4,961,755	100.0	16.0	84.0	63.2	4.7	4.4	2.3	9.4
Alabama	62,669	100.0	39.3	60.7	23.5	11.2	2.1	5.1	18.8
Alaska	3,800	100.0	14.9	85.1	27.1	21.8	1.7	19.2	15.2
Arizona	40,261	100.0	27.2	72.8	45.5	3.1	6.1	7.2	11.9
Arkansas	18,423	100.0	28.2	71.8	39.2	7.3	3.4	.8	21.1
California	513,709	100.0	20.1	79.9	51.1	6.5	4.7	5.8	12.8
Colorado	35,250	100.0	20.6	79.4	48.6	6.4	7.9	3.1	13.5
Connecticut	88,404	100.0	23.8	76.2	69.9	.3	.9	.4	4.8
Delaware	23,374	100.0	18.6	81.4	63.0	7.3	.0	2.4	8.7
District of Columbia	21,203	100.0	21.9	78.1	57.6	.7	.0	1.0	18.8
Florida	204,988	100.0	24.4	75.6	36.2	15.5	4.6	3.7	15.6
Georgia	82,505	100.0	53.9	46.1	16.1	14.1	.5	5.3	10.1
Hawaii	37,147	100.0	35.4	64.6	40.5	6.9	3.6	3.5	10.0
Idaho	5,839	100.0	6.5	93.5	37.5	1.1	10.6	9.0	35.3
Illinois	349,463	100.0	7.4	92.6	79.6	1.3	7.6	.8	3.2
Indiana	100,234	100.0	7.4	92.6	63.1	8.6	9.2	2.9	8.8
Iowa	55,227	100.0	2.4	97.6	81.1	1.9	4.8	.4	9.4
Kansas	33,889	100.0	10.4	89.6	75.6	.9	5.2	3.0	4.9
Kentucky	69,728	100.0	15.8	84.2	72.0	5.7	.3	2.5	3.7
Louisiana	158,921	100.0	19.0	81.0	70.5	2.8	1.3	.4	6.0
Maine	17,840	100.0	45.6	54.4	38.4	4.9	.0	1.4	7.7
Maryland	106,447	100.0	17.7	82.3	64.0	4.5	2.8	1.3	9.6
Massachusetts	138,333	100.0	20.5	79.5	75.7	.2	.0	.3	3.3
Michigan	211,871	100.0	7.5	92.5	61.4	6.3	11.8	.9	12.0
Minnesota	28,966	100.0	5.0	95.0	72.4	3.2	12.3	2.1	5.1
Mississippi	50,116	100.0	60.5	39.5	22.6	6.2	.0	1.6	9.0
Missouri	126,319	100.0	7.0	93.0	75.4	2.1	9.0	.9	5.6
Montana	7,688	100.0	12.1	87.9	61.1	2.6	7.0	.2	17.0
Nebraska	38,574	100.0	3.5	96.5	78.2	.6	12.8	.7	4.1
Nevada	6,599	100.0	14.3	85.7	65.2	4.2	5.0	3.8	7.5
New Hampshire	20,721	100.0	28.4	71.6	54.2	4.0	.0	2.7	10.6
New Jersey	229,878	100.0	10.2	89.8	82.6	.7	.6	.8	5.1
New Mexico	18,027	100.0	28.7	71.3	51.1	4.4	1.2	4.1	10.5
New York	579,670	100.0	12.2	87.8	73.5	.7	1.9	.4	11.3
North Carolina	58,078	100.0	42.4	57.6	16.1	28.2	1.4	3.2	8.9
North Dakota	10,669	100.0	14.7	85.3	77.2	.0	5.0	.0	3.0
Ohio	268,357	100.0	5.3	94.7	84.9	2.4	2.1	2.4	3.0
Oklahoma	16,335	100.0	13.6	86.4	45.2	1.5	4.0	7.4	28.4
Oregon	27,828	100.0	14.6	85.4	51.6	2.8	2.7	7.2	21.1
Pennsylvania	402,058	100.0	9.9	90.1	78.2	1.7	.4	2.0	7.7
Rhode Island	29,875	100.0	8.8	91.2	83.7	.2	.4	.1	6.8
South Carolina	49,619	100.0	49.1	50.9	15.2	19.0	1.0	5.9	9.7
South Dakota	10,898	100.0	16.4	83.6	63.1	.7	4.7	4.3	10.8
Tennessee	71,617	100.0	29.0	71.0	21.2	19.0	2.2	3.2	25.4
Texas	148,534	100.0	12.1	87.9	53.7	7.5	5.7	2.1	19.0
Utah	5,555	100.0	33.5	66.5	55.0	.0	6.7	.0	4.8
Vermont	7,555	100.0	43.2	56.8	54.0	.9	.0	.5	1.4
Virginia	75,069	100.0	35.7	64.3	30.7	14.6	2.4	2.7	13.9
Washington	55,950	100.0	15.9	84.1	48.9	5.4	4.3	5.3	20.2
West Virginia	12,608	100.0	6.7	93.3	67.1	14.8	.0	6.9	4.4
Wisconsin	162,361	100.0	3.7	96.3	67.8	1.5	23.1	.7	3.1
Wyoming	3,036	100.0	25.0	75.0	45.7	17.7	6.9	.0	4.7

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1980-81 Private School Survey, unpublished tabulations (November 1982).

Reprinted from: Plisko, V.W. (Ed.). (1983). The condition of education. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

The vast majority (i.e., more than 90 percent) of private schools are day (as opposed to boarding) coeducational schools. Catholic schools are usually day schools, but only slightly more than half of their graduates come from coeducational schools. A great majority of the non-Catholic private schools are coeducational.

In 1978 more than half of private school pupils were enrolled in schools serving less than 400 students. Of secondary schools, however, three fourths of private school pupils were attending schools with more than 400 students. Generally private schools are reported to have lower pupil/teacher ratios than public schools; however, this cannot be said of Catholic schools. Private schools with over 400 pupils tend to be Catholic (85 percent) while schools with fewer than 100 pupils tend to have affiliations with other churches or no religious affiliation.

In addition to their responsibility for public schools, most states exercise some form of control over private high schools within their jurisdictions. Public schools are required to comply with individual state standards and thus to be accredited. The most common set of standards involve compulsory student attendance, curriculum content, and certification of teachers. Nonpublic schools wishing to be state-accredited, or at least recognized as a legitimate educational institution, must comply with most, if not all state standards as well. In some states, schools failing to comply with state regulations run the risk of having legal actions filed against them.

### **Nonaccredited High Schools**

There are instances where diplomas, while awarded on the basis of fulfilling more or less "traditional" requirements, are not accredited by the state.



Relatively few public schools lack accreditation by regional accrediting associations and/or the state in which they are located. The accreditation issue primarily arises in dealing with some types of "special interest" schools. (However, public schools may temporarily lose their accredited status for major or minor infractions of state or accrediting association standards. To regain their status and continue to operate within the public school system of the state, schools must correct their deficiencies and seek review for accreditation.)

Accreditation of schools has been described as "the process whereby an organization or agency identifies the institution or the particular program as having met certain predetermined qualifications or standards" (Furniss, 1973 p. 1753). Accredited status indicates that minimum standards of quality have been met, but it does not indicate the school's academic ranking. Furthermore, outside of the public secondary school system, accreditation is usually voluntary. Generally, evaluations of schools for accreditation are performed by agencies independent of government control (e.g., one of the six regional accrediting agencies); however, in the case of secondary schools, state universities or departments of education may perform the evaluation leading to accreditation, recognition and/or endorsement.

For example, in Virginia a secondary school may be accredited subsequent to an evaluation by a visiting committee of the Department of Education. Among the areas covered by accreditation standards are philosophy and objectives, credit unit requirements and course distributions, guidance programs, library facilities, and certification of teachers. To be accredited, a public school must meet the requirements set forth by the state department of education. Nonpublic secondary schools can deviate in some areas such as health, physical education, guidance, and so on.

In many states accreditation is voluntary, and the following states have no accreditation, approval, or licensure regulations for private schools (Office of Private Education, 1983):

California  
Delaware  
Florida

Massachusetts  
Minnesota  
Mississippi

New Mexico  
South Carolina  
Wisconsin

This lack of state control over private schools may lead to some confusion as to a school's accreditation status. In California, for example, private schools may be registered (by signing an affidavit and paying \$15.00) with the State without being accredited. Furthermore, just because a school is operating does not necessarily mean it is accredited, or even registered. Regulations over private schools may be either unenforced or unenforceable.

Since parochial and other private or independent schools do not fall under the domain of the state's public school system, they are often not bound to seek accreditation or the accompanying state funds for textbooks or other educational equipment. (It should be noted that Illinois, New York, South Dakota, and West Virginia have mandatory accreditation programs for private schools). Information regarding the number and proportion of private and parochial schools which are unrecognized and unaccredited by the states (and thus issue "nonaccredited" high school diplomas) is lacking. State departments of education know the number and names of religious affiliated schools which they have accredited but they know relatively little, if anything, about those that do not participate in the accrediting process. For example, the University of Missouri has a Committee on Accredited Schools, which reported that as of 1983 there were 69 accredited nonpublic schools in Missouri. This committee whose function is to accredit nonpublic schools did not know the total number of nonpublic schools nor the religious affiliation of those that

were accredited. Table 4 presents estimates of the number of private schools and their enrollment by state together with private school governance information collected in a survey conducted by the Florida State Department of Education.

Catholic schools, which account for the largest subset of private schools, generally are state accredited or recognized. Lutheran and Jewish schools also typically comply with state requirements. Of those schools that do not seek state accreditation, the best known are the fundamentalist church or Christian schools (McGrath, 1983). Fundamentalist church schools are a growing and vocal segment of nonaccredited schools. Christian schools are generally founded by evangelical or fundamentalist churches in order to provide an education compatible with Church teachings. Many of these schools have the external features of traditional public high schools--that is, bells ring, exams are taken and there are courses labeled English, mathematics, science, history, physical education, and music. There is, however, an integration of scripture and secular course content that makes these schools quite different from their public school counterparts (Peshkin, 1983). In addition, discipline is generally quite strict, and the school/church tends to regulate a wider spectrum of student (and teacher) behavior (Peshkin, 1983).

There are different types of Christian education programs ranging from the familiar lockstep graded school to individualized, ungraded programs. The particular brand of Christian education one receives in these schools often depends upon the Christian organization or association of which the individual school is a member and the Christian curriculum publisher which serves the organization.

Table 4

Private School Accreditation Information and  
Estimated Enrollment by State

STATE	GOVERNANCE					STATE ASSOCIATIONS		TOTAL	TOTAL
	State Accred.	State Approval	State Licensure	State Teacher Certification	State Umbrella Assoc.	State Advisory Group	Number of Private Schools	Private School Enrollment	
Alabama	VOL	NO	VOL (Nonprop) MAND (Prop)	MAND (Not enforced) VOL	NO	NO	No Reporting Capability 58	No Reporting Capability 3,212	
Alaska	NO	MAND	VOL	VOL	NO	NO	510	59,313	
Arizona	VOL	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	133	17,247	
Arkansas	NO	NO	NO	VOL (Mand. Sp. Ed.)	YES	NO	3,165	434,150	
California	VOL	NO	NO	VOL	NO	NO	260	40,000	
Colorado	NO	VOL	NO	VOL	YES (Also Accred.)	NO	367	89,202	
Connecticut	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	87	23,202	
Delaware	NO	NO	NO	VOL	YES (Also Accred.)	YES	1,203	207,511	
Florida	VOL	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	366	60,686	
Georgia	NO	MAND	MAND	MAND	YES	NO	136	34,301	
Hawaii	VOL	NO	NO	MAND (Not enforced) VOL	NO	NO	4 (Acc'd Schls. only)	800 (Acc'd Schls. only)	
Idaho	VOL	NO	NO	VOL	YES	YES	1,475	353,152	
Illinois	(Recognition)	NO	NO	VOL	YES	NO	296	80,055	
Indiana	VOL	VOL	VOL	VOL	YES	YES	231	54,192	
Iowa	NO	VOL	NO	MAND	NO	NO	167	28,330	
Kansas	VOL	NO	NO	VOL	NO	NO	370	75,181	
Kentucky	VOL	VOL	MAND	VOL	YES	NO	403	143,121	
Louisiana	NO	VOL	NO	VOL	YES	NO	No Reporting Capability 713	12,000	
Maine	VOL	MAND	MAND	MAND	YES	NO	126,172	108,544	
Maryland	NO	MAND (Vol. for chur.sch)	NO	VOL	YES	NO	676	204,020	
Massachusetts	NO	NO	NO	VOL	YES	YES	927	90,919	
Michigan	VOL	MAND	NO	MAND	NO	NO	505	11,484	
Minnesota	NO	NO	NO	VOL	NO	NO	49 (Cath. sch.)	No Reporting Capability 10 (Accred.)	
Mississippi	VOL	VOL	VOL	VOL	NO	NO	No Reporting Capability 10 (Accred.)	No Reporting Capability	
Missouri	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	No Reporting Capability 10 (Accred.)	No Reporting Capability	
Montana	VOL (Hi sch only)	NO	NO	VOL	YES	NO	No Reporting Capability 10 (Accred.)	No Reporting Capability	

Table 4 (Continued)

STATE	GOVERNANCE					STATE ASSOCIATIONS		TOTAL Number of Private Schools	TOTAL Private School Enrollment
	State Accred.	State Approval	State Licensure	State Teacher Certification	State Nubrella Assoc.	State Advisory Group			
Nebraska	VOL	MAND	MAND	MAND	YES (By-pass fed. funds)	NO	220	37,522	
Nevada	NO	VOL (Church affiliated)	VOL (Ch. affil) MAND (Non ch. affiliated)	VOL (Ch. affil) MAND (Non ch. affiliated)	NO	NO	73	5,154	
New Hampshire	NO	MAND	NO	VOL	NO	YES	122	18,366	
New Jersey	NO	VOL	NO	NO	YES	NO	1,050+	210,000+	No Reporting Capability
New Mexico	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	68	583,873	
New York	MAND	NO	NO	VOL	NO	NO	2,015	56,023	
North Carolina	VOL	NO	NO	VOL	YES	NO	326	10,305	
North Dakota	VOL	MAND	NO	MAND	YES	NO	72	249,454	
Ohio	NO	MAND	NO	MAND	NO	NO	804	No Reporting Capability	
Oklahoma	VOL	NO	NO	VOL	NO	NO	196	25,440	
Oregon	VOL	VOL	VOL	NO	YES	YES	1,667	406,485	
Pennsylvania	NO	NO	MAND (For non relig. sch.)	NO	YES	NO	106	29,075	
Rhode Island	VOL	MAND	NO	VOL	YES	NO	429	54,047	
South Carolina*	NO	NO	NO	Upon Request	YES	NO	161	12,883	
South Dakota	VOL (Gr. 9-12) MAND (Gr. K-8)	NO	NO	VOL (Gr. 9-12) MAND (Gr. K-8)	NO	NO	441	No Reporting Capability	
Tennessee	NO	VOL	NO	NO	NO	NO	413	113,290	
Texas	VOL	NO	VOL	VOL	NO	NO	No Reporting Capability	No Reporting Capability	
Utah	VOL	VOL	VOL	VOL	YES	NO	60	9,253	
Vermont	NO	MAND	NO	NO	YES	NO	419	63,983	
Virginia	VOL	NO	NO	VOL	YES	NO	362	54,000+	
Washington	VOL	MAND	NO	MAND (Except for Teach Rel)	YES	NO	22	4,930	
West Virginia	MAND (Classifica)	MAND (Co. Bd Approval)	NO	MAND	NO	NO	930	163,251	
Wisconsin	NO	NO	NO	VOL	YES	NO	40	4,000	
Wyoming	VOL (Equivalent)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO			

\*Data Received 2/26/81

Reprinted from Private school governance information (1983). U.S. Department of Education, Executive Assistant to the Secretary, Office of Private Education.

This information was obtained through a 1980-81 survey conducted by the Florida State Department of Education and research conducted by the Education Commission of the States.

Among the major Christian school associations are the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), and the American Association of Christian Schools. The schools within the ACSI tend to use familiar or conventional lockstep curricula. Within the schools which are members of ACSI, approximately 22,000 students earn their diplomas each year from approximately 1,800 schools.

Less-traditional curricula are used in many Christian schools. The philosophies and curricula of Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) are vehicles for providing "alternative" educational experiences within Christian schools. Started in 1970, ACE provides its franchise schools with learning materials for self-paced instruction in an open and nongraded environment. In the 1981-82 school year there were approximately 4,500 Christian schools using ACE and 13,000 graduates of ACE programs. Generally, schools using ACE and other standardized Christian curricular materials tend to have rather small enrollments, but the number of such schools is on the rise.

The popular press reports that nationwide 600,000 students are enrolled across all Christian schools and grade levels (McGrath, 1983). While this rate is small compared with the number who earn their diplomas through public or accredited private and/or parochial schools, there may be many more individuals earning high school diplomas through nonaccredited religious schools which are not members of ACSI as well as through other types of nonaccredited schools or programs. According to the principal of one non-state-accredited Christian school located in Oregon, there are thousands of private, independent, non-state approved or affiliated schools.

The reasons for the lack of state accreditation may vary, but according to the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), many Christian schools simply do not seek "secular" accreditation for reasons related to their commitment to separation of church and state. They refuse state review of their curriculum and teachers. Other possible sources of such traditionally earned yet nonaccredited diplomas are racially segregated schools, and schools with unlicensed members on their teaching staffs.

## Competency Testing and Related Credentials

Perhaps the most persistent feature of public concern about education during the past 15 years has been continuing questions as to the "meaning" of the high school diploma in terms of the academic achievement it signifies. The traditional diploma is no longer publicly regarded as evidence of academic competence. In response to such concerns, minimum competency testing began to flourish in the 1970s. Many schools began to use some form of test to verify that students possess specific skills or competencies regarded as essential or representative of high school graduates. Table 5 presents information on the states using minimum competency testing (as of 1983), the governmental level of control, types of skills assessed, and whether students must pass the test to get a high school diploma.

For the most part, competency tests are used by schools to measure the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and language usage. Such testing is used for a variety of purposes, including identification of students needing remedial assistance, instructional improvement, grade promotion, and graduation. As shown in Table 5, as of 1983 there are 34 states using some form of minimum competency testing at the high school level. Figure 1 further indicates that there are 21 states which currently either require passing such a competency test for graduation or give local districts the option of stipulating such a requirement. Three states have plans to implement competency testing as a graduation requirement in the near future. In addition, competency tests may be used in "early out" programs. Some states allow students who pass the necessary competency tests to receive their diplomas or certificates and graduate early from high school.



Table 5

**High School Level Minimum Competency Testing by State,  
Governmental Control, Skills, and Use as a Graduation Requirement**

State	Gov't Level Setting Standards	Type of Skills Assessed	Current or Planned Use for H.S. Graduation Early Exit	
Alabama	State	Math, reading, language	1984	
Arizona	State/Local	Reading, writing, computation	X	
California	State/Local	Reading, writing, compu- tation & consumer economics & math for early out	X	X
Colorado	Local	Local option	Local Option	
Connecticut	State	Reading, language, math		
Delaware	State	Application of reading, writing & math	Public schools only	
Florida	State/Local	Basic Skills/Functional literacy	X	X
Georgia	State	?	No final action on use	
Idaho	State	Reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling	Local Option	
Illinois	Local	Reading, math	Local Option but no single test may used	
Indiana	Local	Reading, composition, spelling, social studies, math, science	Local Option	
Kansas	State	Reading, math		
Kentucky	State/Local	Reading, writing, spelling, language, math		
Louisiana	State	Reading, writing, math	1992	
Maryland	State	Reading	X	
Massachusetts	Local	Math, communication listening, speaking		
Missouri	State	Application of reading, language, math, gov't, economics		

Table 5 (Continued)

State	Gov't Level Setting Standards	Type of Skills Assessed	Current or Planned Use for	
			H.S. Graduation	Early Exit
Nebraska	Local	Reading, writing, math		
Nevada	State	Reading, writing, math	X	
New Hampshire	State	Communications, math	Some districts	
New Jersey	State	Reading, writing computation	1985	
New Mexico	State	Proficiency battery based on Adult Performance Level (APL) Writing sample-local option	Proficiency Endorsement	
New York	State	Reading, comprehension, writing, math	X	
North Carolina	State	Independent functioning and citizenship skills	X	
Ohio	Local	English, composition, math, reading	Local option	
Oregon	Local	Reading, writing, speaking, listening, math, reasoning	X	
South Carolina	State	Math, reading, writing	Decision in 1989	
Tennessee	State/Local	Reading, math, grammar, spelling	X	
Texas	Not Reported	Reading, writing, math, language		
Utah	Local	Reading, writing, speaking, listening, arithmetic, demo- cratic governance, consumerism problem solving, etc.	X	
Vermont	State	Reading, writing, speaking, listening, math, reasoning	X	
Virginia	State/Local	Reading, math (state) citizenship (local)	X	
Wisconsin	Local	Reading, language, math	Local option	
Wyoming	Local	Reading, writing, computing, democratic gov't, free enterprise		

Source: Pipho, C. (1981), "State activity, minimum competency testing." ECS Informa-  
tion Clearinghouse, Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States (1983  
Update included)

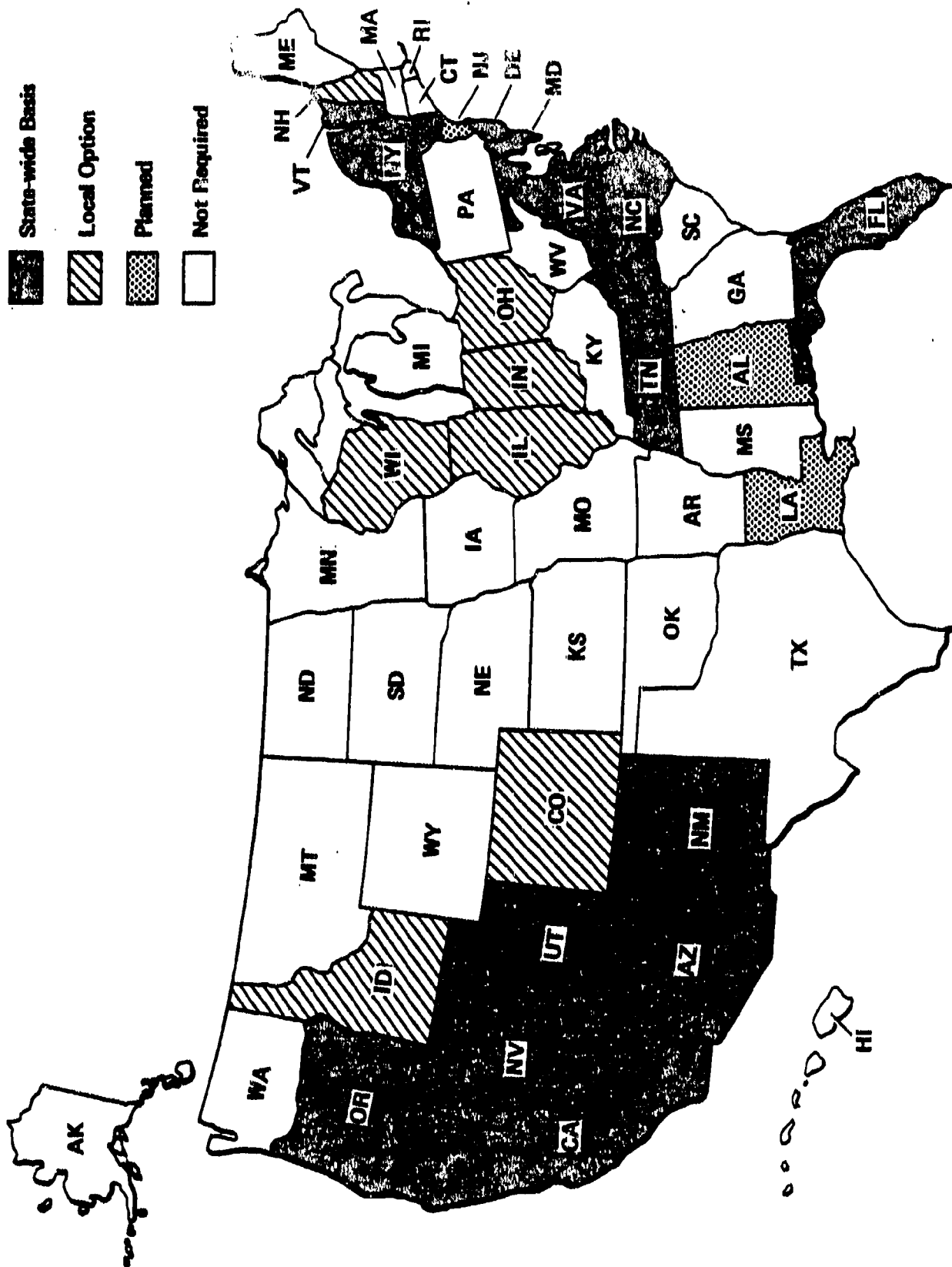


Figure 1. Competency Testing Used as a Requirement for Graduation

The situation in California provides an example of state mandated minimum competency testing which is implemented through local school district tests. All California schools administer local district proficiency tests covering reading comprehension, writing, and computation skills. A student must pass the district's California proficiency test (CPT) at least once between grades 10 and 11 in order to graduate from high school. In some cases (i.e., in accordance with local regulations), high school equivalency certificate recipients may take a CPT and if they pass, receive a regular diploma. Note that this type of proficiency testing should not be confused with the certificate of proficiency issued as a result of passing the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE). This test is explained in greater detail below.

The quest to bring meaning to the high school diploma has instigated more than just the use of minimum competency tests. Concomitant with the competency testing movement have been attempts to offer different types of diplomas or to display on the diploma information regarding the student's curriculum type and competencies. Variations on the regular high school diploma thus may include:

- Honors diploma,
- College preparatory or academic diploma,
- Scholastic diploma,
- Vocational or technical diploma,
- General diploma, and
- Diplomas with proficiency endorsements.

#### **Alternative Diplomas and Credentials**

Another side effect of the competency testing movement is the need to deal with individuals who have completed the required high school courses but

who fail the competency test required for a diploma. Various certificates or "non-diplomas" are being issued to these "almost graduates." Basically the distinction between certificates and diplomas can be summarized as: Graduation merits a diploma while attendance deserves a certificate. The three main types of certificates are listed below (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1980). These terms may be used synonymously at times, and there are variations from school to school regarding the exact name of the certificate issued.

- **Certificate of Attendance.** Awarded to regular full-time members of a graduating class who have failed to complete specified requirements for graduation (e.g., minimum number of credit units, minimum GPA, competency test).
- **Certificate of Completion.** Awarded to regular, full-time members of a graduating class who have completed all course requirements but have failed to pass a mandatory competency test.
- **Certificate of Competency.** Awarded to regular full-time member of a graduating class who pass the required minimum competency test but do not meet course, scholarship, or attendance requirements for graduation. (If issued to dropouts, this credential indicates competence level at point of departure from high school.)

### **Some Problems with Competency Testing**

The increasing use of minimum competency tests to determine eligibility for high school graduation has not been without its critics. Academically,

there is some concern that minimums may indeed become maximums. Educators and other citizens fear that students may not strive to excel but merely meet the minimum standards.

Defining minimum competency (or even competency for that matter) is yet a more fundamental problem surrounding this movement. What skills and/or abilities must a student possess, how much must they possess to be deemed competent, and how shall they be assessed? Controversy over specifying such objectives continues, and a definitive answer does not seem likely (Jaeger, & Tittle, 1980). Not only do such questions create controversy but they have legal implications as well. Among the allegations against minimum competency testing is that its equivocal results limit access for minority students to postsecondary institutions and to further certification programs (Pullen, 1981). Such attacks on minimum competency testing have been instrumental in either making the tests easier or lowering standards. Questions of accountability for student failure and its legal implications may also be partially responsible for decreasing the substance of some competency programs.

Regardless of whether competency programs have been diluted, some individuals may not qualify for a secondary school credential because they did not meet a particular standard. Since the skills, assessment methods, standards, and other practices vary among states and school districts, it is possible that a student may not receive a diploma from school "A" but may have earned one from school "B" had he or she lived in a different location. Varying practices raise questions concerning the equity of competency testing, and the credentialing process.

## **Nontraditional Diploma Programs**

Other types of high school programs or alternative paths to the diploma are available to typical high school age students within public and private high schools. Examples include night schools, proprietary schools, TV courses, vocational or technical programs, and credit for out-of-school experiences, such as work-apprenticeships or community service. These alternative paths seem to offer a more individualistic approach to education. Although some residency requirements remain, education under such programs is not necessarily synonymous with schooling. A variety of flexible learning options are provided and in some cases tailored to individuals who have left school without a diploma.

### **Adult Education Diplomas**

Adult education encompasses a large spectrum of programs, methodologies, instructional materials, and delivery mechanisms. This is true even among federally assisted and state-administered programs which are reported to the U.S. Department of Education. Educational opportunities in these programs include instruction in English as a second language, preparation classes for the General Educational Development (GED) tests, vocational or technical curricula, and curricula leading to the high school diploma. In 1981, approximately 53,000, or 2.4 percent of adult education participants, obtained a high school diploma. The Department of Education reports that on the average, each state has 635 different agencies, institutions, and organizations providing adult education. Examples of these offerers include business and industry, churches, local education agencies, and vocational-technical schools (Department of Education, 1983).

A variety of credentials are offered under state and/or local community provisions for adults (usually defined as persons age 16 and older, or six months out of school). These diplomas may be issued by the state, local school district, or school and may or may not be distinguishable from the regular high school diploma. Credit can be obtained through traditional means (i.e., classroom curriculum), through nontraditional means (e.g., credit for learning through life experiences, trade school courses, military service, homemaking, testing), or through a combination of both methods. Credit is usually given for previously completed high school coursework; the program is usually part time, its length is abbreviated, and "classes" are normally held in the evening. In addition to the variety of paths to the adult education diploma, there seem to be a variety of names for this credential. In Colorado, for instance, 4 of the 181 local districts offer a "district diploma" through an adult educational program for high school dropouts. Twenty-five of Connecticut's 169 districts provide for "regular" diplomas to adults. Six adult high schools in Delaware grant a "State of Delaware Diploma" for adults and youths who have had at least a six-month separation from high school; the inclusion of the phrase "State of Delaware" on the diploma differentiates it from the standard Delaware high school or GED diploma.

### **External Diplomas**

External diploma programs (sometimes referred to as alternative or adult diploma programs) which originated in New York, were designed to provide adults with an alternative to the GED. They are high school credentialing programs for adults who have acquired skills through their life experiences. Credit toward a high school diploma can be obtained through traditional and nontraditional (e.g., learning through life experiences) ways. This diploma can be obtained by demonstrating competencies through an applied performance



assessment system. That is, external diploma program participants are required to demonstrate their use of acquired skills to complete tasks necessary for successful functioning in society. The types of competencies assessed may include communication, computation, consumer awareness, social awareness, and occupational preparedness. Generally, external diploma programs involve more flexibility and individualization in content and assessment than do traditional diploma programs (Bailey, Macy, & Vickers, 1973). Upon meeting the requirements of an external diploma program, a state diploma is usually issued; however, in some areas a local high school diploma can also be issued.

While this diploma program is usually offered to "out-of-school" adults, school-age youth are not precluded from participating. The New York program has been adopted in Maryland, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Montana, Virginia, Connecticut, California, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia (University of the State of New York, 1983). In some cases variations of this program are instituted as alternatives to regular high school programs. The Massachusetts Department of Education, for example, has adapted the external diploma program for use with youth. In this case, skills which lead to the competencies adults have acquired through life must actually be taught in schools or in some manner be incorporated into the curriculum.

#### **Correspondence School Diplomas**

Diplomas earned through home study schools provide yet another alternative to the traditionally earned diploma. Correspondence schools, while they may share many of the "regular" schools' academic and course requirements, lack their attendance requirements and the resulting social experiences (e.g.,

peer and direct teacher interactions) that high school students typically receive. Credit towards a correspondence school diploma may be given for past achievements such as previous schooling, work experience, and high school equivalency testing. A diploma can be obtained through a flexible correspondence school curriculum within a relatively short period of time without sitting at a school desk.

Home study schools offer courses covering vocational (e.g., machine shop), professional (e.g., accounting), and general (e.g., academic) skills. Credentials awarded vary according to the specific program of instruction completed. Individuals can take isolated courses without earning a credential, complete vocational correspondence programs and earn various certificates (e.g., a nonacademic or vocational certificate of completion), or complete a series of academic courses and obtain a secondary education diploma.

The major accrediting agency for correspondence school programs is the National Home Study Council (NHSC). Some of the NHSC accredited schools award a high school diploma upon completion of a program of home instruction. These schools may require a previous minimum educational requirement, and credit may be granted for past high school courses, employment, or military experience. One of the largest NHSC-accredited correspondence schools is the American School, which awards approximately 3,000 diplomas a year. Most of its students are between the ages of 20 and 30. Within correspondence high school diploma programs, such as those offered by the American School or the International Correspondence School, vocational, general, or college preparatory curricula are available to participants. While a prescribed number of modules must be completed and examinations passed to earn a diploma, various completion documents may be awarded for incremental achievement in the program.

## Home Education

In addition to home study through correspondence schools, there is a small, but growing trend toward home education. Only 18 states have no provisions for home schooling (Office of Private Education, 1983). These states are:

Arkansas  
Georgia  
Illinois  
Indiana  
Kentucky  
Maryland

Massachusetts  
Minnesota  
Nebraska  
New Hampshire  
New York  
North Carolina

North Dakota  
Pennsylvania  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Washington  
Wyoming

Many state compulsory school-attendance laws do not preclude at least certified teachers (or parents) from instructing school-aged individuals in the home, provided the instruction is deemed equivalent or comparable to that of the public schools.

## High School Equivalency Certificates

Although one would be hard pressed to come up with an exhaustive list of secondary school level education credentials and programs, the list would be far from complete without mentioning high school equivalency certificates. While individuals may engage in some sort of preparatory course or program (either formally as in adult education, or informally) these credentials are usually obtained solely on the basis of testing in academic content areas.

GED. General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency testing is perhaps the best known method of obtaining a high school equivalency

credential. This credential is issued to persons who achieve state-set minimum passing scores on a battery of five multiple-choice tests (covering writing skills, social studies, science, reading skills, and mathematics) developed by the American Council on Education (ACE). The GED tests are normed on high school seniors and these norms are periodically updated. Test scores are reported in terms of standard scores ranging from 20 to 80 (mean = 50, standard deviation = 10). States employ one of three types of minimum score requirements: (1) an overall average score for all five tests (e.g., an average score of 45); (2) a minimum for each test or an average score for the entire battery (e.g., a student could pass by earning no score below 40 or by obtaining an average of 45 for the five tests); (3) a minimum for each test and an overall average for the battery (e.g., the student might need an average of 45 with no score below 40). States must set their minimum requirements at or above the minimum score requirement recommended by ACE's Commission on Educational Credit and Credentials (i.e., a minimum of 40 on each test or a mean of 45 for the battery). Most states use the third approach to setting standards with their actual requirements being 35 and 45. This may appear to be more lenient than the commissions's minimum, but in fact it is not since only 69 percent of the 1980 norming group met this requirement while 74 percent met the 40 or 45 requirement of the commission (General Educational Development Testing Service, 1982b).

In addition to score requirements, states have different residency, age, and length of time away from school requirements for taking the GED test and issuing the GED credential. The latter requirements are imposed to avoid encouraging individuals from dropping out of high school while the residency

requirement is used to prevent GED center hopping. In some instances an individual can take the GED tests, pass them, but not be awarded the equivalency credential until he or she has reached a certain age or until the high school class that the person would have belonged to has graduated.

Within the United States, 756,155 persons took the GED tests in 1982 and approximately two-thirds earned scores that qualified them for the credential in accordance with state criteria. The average age of examinees was 25 and approximately 36 percent were 19 years of age or younger. Those under age 25 accounted for roughly 65 percent of examinees (General Educational Development Testing Service, 1982a). These tests are designed to appraise the educational development of those who have not completed their formal high school curricula.

While all states issue a credential on the basis of the GED tests, the actual title of the credential (as well as some of the requirements leading to it) varies from state to state. Table 6 shows these labeling differences. While most states issue a credential which bears the word "equivalency", some states issue credentials with titles that may be almost indistinguishable from regular high school diplomas. In addition to labeling these credentials as high school diplomas, in some states it may be possible for individuals to obtain a regular diploma from their local school on the basis of GED testing. Regardless of the exact title, the GED credential signifies that the holder possesses the knowledge and skills generally associated with high school instruction--that is, it is designed to be academically equivalent to the traditional diploma.

Table 6  
Title of GED Credential by State

State	Credential Title
Alabama	State Certificate of High School Equivalency
Alaska	State of Alaska High School Diploma
Arizona	Arizona High School Certificate of Equivalency
Arkansas	Certificate of Equivalency of High School Graduation
California	California High School Equivalency Certificate
Colorado	High School Equivalency Certificate
Connecticut	State High School Diploma
Delaware	Delaware State Board of Education Endorsement
District of Columbia	High School Equivalency Certificate
Florida	High School Diploma
Georgia	High School Equivalency Certificate
Hawaii	Department of Education High School Certificate
Idaho	Idaho High School Equivalency Certificate
Illinois	High School Equivalency Certificate
Indiana	High School Equivalency Certificate
Iowa	High School Equivalency Diploma
Kansas	Kansas State High School Equivalency Diploma
Kentucky	High School Equivalency Certificate
Louisiana	State High School Equivalency Diploma
Maine	High School Equivalency Diploma
Maryland	Maryland High School Diploma
Massachusetts	Massachusetts State High School Equivalency Certificate
Michigan	State High School Equivalency Certificate
Minnesota	Secondary School Equivalency Certificate
Mississippi	Certificate of High School Equivalence
Missouri	Certificate of High School Equivalence

**Table 6 (Continued)**

<b>State</b>	<b>Credential Title</b>
Montana	High School Equivalency Certificate
Nebraska	High School Diploma
Nevada	Certificate of High School Equivalency
New Hampshire	Certificate of High School Equivalency
New Jersey	High School Equivalent Diploma
New Mexico	New Mexico High School Diploma
New York	New York State High School Equivalency Diploma
North Carolina	High School Diploma Equivalency
North Dakota	North Dakota High School Equivalency Certificate
Ohio	Certificate of High School Equivalence
Oklahoma	Certificate of High School Equivalency
Oregon	Oregon High School Certificate of Equivalency
Pennsylvania	Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma
Rhode Island	High School Equivalency Diploma
South Carolina	State High School Equivalency Certificate
South Dakota	High School Equivalency Diploma
Tennessee	Equivalency High School Diploma
Texas	Certificate of High School Equivalency
Utah	Certificate of General Educational Development
Vermont	Vermont Secondary School Equivalence Diploma
Virginia	Commonwealth of Virginia General Educational Development Certificate
Washington	Certificate of Educational Competence
West Virginia	State High School Equivalent Diploma
Wisconsin	State of Wisconsin High School Equivalency Diploma
Wyoming	High School Equivalency Certificate

Source: The GED Testing Service (1978). The GED testing program policies & centers. Washington, DC: The American Council on Education; and Personal Communication with GED State Administrators, 1982.

Other Equivalency Certificates. As mentioned, GED testing is not the only means by which one can obtain a high school equivalency certificate. Equivalency certificates other than the GED exist among the 50 states. Generally based upon testing, individuals can obtain the legal equivalent of a diploma for the particular state in which the equivalency "program" is offered and accredited or endorsed.

The California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE) is an example of a testing method other than the GED which leads to a diploma equivalent. This test, which was implemented during the 1975-76 school year, consists of 150 scorable multiple-choice items and two essays covering basic skills in reading, writing, and computation. An individual must demonstrate proficiency in both the objective and essay portions of the test in order to pass the CHSPE. For both sections passing scores were determined from the performance of 12th graders. In 1980 over 45,000 people took the CHSPE, and of those roughly 49 percent passed the test. In California, a person who is 16 years of age or who has completed at least the second semester of the sophomore year of high school may take the CHSPE and receive a Certificate of Proficiency for passing it. This credential may be used to exit early from high school or may be earned by individuals who have already left the formal school system.

For the multiple choice portion of the test, an individual must score at the 50th percentile of the norming group in order to pass. The essay questions are scored subjectively by a panel consisting mostly of high school and college teachers.

Alluded to previously, there are other methods aside from testing through which equivalency certificates may be granted. In New York and New



Jersey, for example, completion of 24 college credits with a minimum grade point average of 2.0 in an approved degree program qualifies an individual for an equivalency credential. Variations in the paths to equivalency certificates, as well as to the previously mentioned secondary school credentials, certainly extend beyond the generalizations presented in this report.

### Concluding Note: The Enlistment Policy Dilemma

Since the introduction, approximately two decades ago, of differential enlistment aptitude standards based upon educational level, there has been a substantial increase in the number of secondary education credentials and programs offered in this country. There are numerous forms of high school "diplomas", several varieties of "substitute" certificates for students who fail to graduate but complete most requirements, and various programs for persons who leave high school before graduating and later seek documentation that they have the practical "equivalent" of a high school education. This proliferation of credentials is further complicated by the fact that achievement and completion requirements differ among states, school districts, and even among individual schools. The plethora of secondary school credentials, programs, and experiences makes it extremely difficult for the Military Services to categorize credentials into one of the three broad educational categories--high school diploma graduate, GED, or non-high school graduate--currently used for enlistment. At present, there is no comprehensive or Service-common definition of the circumstances or credentials that allow military applicants to be labelled high school graduates and thus to be preferred for enlistment.

Exactly which of the many secondary level education credentials are or should be accepted by the Services as high school diplomas for enlistment purposes is difficult to determine. All Services accept high school certificates of completion and attendance as equivalent to the diploma based on the untested assumption that consistent attendance (or seat time) rather than academic

requirements such as passing a competency test accounts for the better adaptability of high school diploma graduates. The Services are not quite consistent in their enlistment assumptions however. For example, three of the four Services accept individuals with correspondence school diplomas (from accredited schools) as high school diploma graduates, although this credential does not involve attendance. While it does not resolve the military enlistment dilemma, a more complete description (and discussion) of Service educational standards can be found in: Education Standards for Enlistment and the Search for Successful Recruits (Laurence, 1983).

Questions concerning the treatment of various credentials for enlistment purposes are bound to continue as long as either empirical evidence on the military performance of individuals with alternative credentials is lacking, or the attributes which account for success remain unknown. What is it about the completion of the high school experience and/or the individuals who graduate that makes them persevere and perform well in the military? Is it social qualities and experiences such as perseverance, maturity, participation in group learning situations, the classroom environment, tolerance of and adaptability to rules and regulations, or determination? Or might specific types of high school programs, graduation requirements and/or patterns of attendance and course grades be the "true" predictor of military performance differences? The present report was not designed to answer these questions, but it is intended to aid policymakers by outlining the variety of educational credentials and experiences that must be dealt with in setting military enlistment standards.

Even if it is possible to obtain empirical data on the military performance of individuals from every secondary school program, educational

screening issues cannot be expected to disappear. Most likely when educational standards became operational in the 1960s, policymakers did not anticipate such credential confusion as exists today. Likewise further alternative credentials and programs are likely to surface in the years to come. This possibility favors research aimed at uncovering attributes or particular experiences rather than credentials that are predictive of military success.

Taking this more molecular approach has several advantages. It might, for example, reduce the misunderstanding of educational enlistment standards. Despite the fact that the Services do not rely on the diploma to indicate cognitive ability (the AFQT score is used for this purpose), educational groups, parents, and applicants themselves (and even recruiters) often find it difficult to speak of an educational experience without thinking of aptitude. Furthermore, while most individuals obtain their diplomas by the traditional approach, the number of persons with alternative credentials is on the rise. Thus, practical consideration of changes in the manpower pool may dictate increasing use of currently less-preferred applicant groups. It is important, therefore, to perform the research necessary for selecting the most promising among these individuals.

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