

Competency Tests

State Board of Education Chairman Bill Harrison says the education agency didn't mean to make it hard for former students who failed competency tests to get diplomas, or for schools to give them out. The state Department of Public Instruction told school districts to find former students, going as far back as 1981, and tell them they can get diplomas if they met credit requirements but didn't pass state competency tests. It's likely that most of those students would have received certificates in place of diplomas, and Harrison said DPI meant only for students to present certificates and have the school or local district swap them for diplomas. Students don't need to find their old transcripts, Harrison said. This despite instructions in a sample letter to students posted on the state public schools' Web site that say: "You will need a copy of your high school transcript that shows that you earned credit in all courses required for graduation at the time that your diploma was withheld." Harrison said he hadn't seen the sample letter, and if it was there, it would come off the Web site. "I don't know how many students would have kept their transcripts after 20 years," he said. "I didn't." (Dome, THE NEWS & OBSERVER, 11/11/09).