



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: P-12 Education/Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Joint Committee

FROM: John B. King, Jr.
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SUBJECT: Alternative High School Equivalency Preparation (AHSEP) Programs and General Educational Development (GED) Testing

DATE: December 29, 2010

STRATEGIC GOAL: Goals 1 and 2

AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The purpose of this item is to provide the Board with information on the status of Alternative High School Equivalency Preparation (AHSEP) and High School Equivalency Preparation (HSEP) Programs and their relationship with Adult Education Programs and General Educational Development (GED) Test administration. In addition, information is included on possible next steps to identify and address gaps in accountability, data reporting, and the tracking of students who leave high school without securing a high school diploma. These issues cross over between The Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) and P-12 Education.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Information and discussion so that the Board may consider policies that will provide for greater accountability for student outcomes from these programs and an enhanced GED testing policy that will ensure greater success and readiness for all who take the GED test.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the Regents P-12 Education/ACCES Joint Committee at its January 2011 meeting.

Background Information

AHSEP/HSEP Programs, Adult Education Programs, and GED Test administration are three areas of responsibility providing services to two major groups of GED test takers. GED test takers include:

- Youth generally ages 16 to 19, with limited numbers of 20 and 21 year olds; and
- Adults predominately age 21 and older, with limited numbers of 19 and 20 year olds.

The P-12 Education Office provides oversight for GED preparation for youth, primarily through AHSEP and HSEP Programs. ACCES provides oversight for GED preparation for adults. ACCES also provides oversight for and administration of the GED test for all GED test takers in New York State. While ACCES staff communicate and work with Department staff in P-12, the work duties, program responsibilities, stakeholders, and customers are very different.

AHSEP and HSEP Programs

In NYS, approximately 404 AHSEP and HSEP Programs are run by districts, BOCES, and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Generally, these programs are directed towards students under 21 years of age who have fallen behind in earning high school credits towards a regular local or Regents diploma.

Access to AHSEP and HSEP programs is most often limited to only those students who are significantly behind in high school credits. Specifically, a student must be:

- at least 16 (17 in some districts) years of age and the school year in which the student turned 16 (or 17) has ended;
- less than the age of 19, and have fewer than 12.5 percent of the number of credits required by the school district for a diploma multiplied by the number of years the student has been in grades 9 through 12.

Approval may be granted for a variance from the eligibility requirements set forth in regulations upon a finding by the Commissioner that exceptional circumstances warrant such a variance.

AHSEP and HSEP program students often have very limited skills, typically below the 9th grade reading level ability used to enter GED preparation programs. AHSEP programs must offer at least 12 hours of weekly instruction aligned with a student's reading and math assessment scores upon entry. Programs provide a full range of courses that match the core content areas measured by the GED test and at least one hour of Career and Technical Education (CTE). HSEP programs offer at least six and not more than 20 hours of weekly instruction. HSEP programs do not have a CTE requirement.

AHSEP and HSEP students begin their instructional preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) tests when they are determined to be at or above a 9.0 reading and mathematics level on a standardized achievement test; an example is TABE. It is further recommended, but not required, that students take and pass the Official Practice Test (OPT) in the five core subject areas each with a 410 minimum score and a 2250 total minimum score that demonstrates GED readiness.

Data and Accountability for AHSEP and HSEP Programs and Students

Each school district, BOCES or agency interested in operating an AHSEP or HSEP program submits an annual application to SED. The Student Support Services Program Office within P-12's District Services Office has oversight responsibilities for AHSEP and HSEP programs. This office approves individual programs and provides oversight and technical assistance to the programs in accordance with the Commissioner's Regulations.

Approximately 162 school districts, including the Big 5 and 36 BOCES operate 385 AHSEP/HSEP programs. OCFS operates 18 AHSEP sites and Kingsborough Community College operates one program. SED maintains data on AHSEP and HSEP students as reported in a separate data system known as System of Accountability for Student Success (SASS). P-12 has established a process similar to the Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) process to identify programs in need of corrective action. The three key measures for AHSEP and HSEP program success are based on established State performance reference points which are defined as either "meet," "at" or "below" the State standards. Data are reported in October of each year and programs are identified in March.

See Attachment A for SASS data on AHSEP and HSEP students.

For accountability purposes, districts identify students in AHSEP and HSEP programs as "transfer" students. If the student is still enrolled or has passed the GED, then the student is removed from the district's denominator (total number of students in the year's cohort for the respective district), thus not counting as a negative outcome for the district for NCLB ELA and mathematics performance reporting purposes. In regards to graduation rate accountability under NCLB, the district is not provided with any benefit for AHSEP or HSEP students who continue in the program or pass the GED.

The only incentive for accountability reporting purposes to districts for students to continue and achieve in AHSEP programs is in ELA and mathematics NCLB reporting requirements. Otherwise, an AHSEP student, no matter the performance, remains in the district's cohort as a non-graduate for determining graduation rate accountability.

Since AHSEP students are reported as transfers, districts do not received the same level of state aid as they do for full day students. To support students in AHSEP programs, districts receive equivalent attendance aid which is minimal compared to full day program student aid.

Adult Education and GED Preparation Programs

Adult Education in New York includes about 185 funded centers that include instruction in Adult Basic Education (ABE), literacy training, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Career and Technical Education (CTE), and GED preparation programs, and countless unfunded programs. Programs are run by school districts, BOCES, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), SUNY, CUNY, Literacy Training Centers, Literacy Zones, and others. Adult Education is funded through a combination of federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), State Employment Preparation Education (EPE), Adult Literacy Education (ALE), Welfare Education Program (WEP), and various other sources.

Funded Adult Education Programs, including GED Preparation Programs, are held accountable through the Department's Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) data collection and accountability system. This system is based upon federal National Reporting System (NRS) standards for adult education gain. The Department also issues annual Adult Education Report Cards to reflect the gain and possible need for corrective action and technical assistance for those programs that are not meeting NRS standards. ACCES provides oversight for the ASISTS data system.

GED Test Administration

The Department is the sole administrator of the GED test in New York State as recognized by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the GED Testing Service (GEDTS). GED testing is administered, managed, and overseen by the Adult Education Programs and Policy (AEPP) Office's GED Testing Unit within ACCES.

No matter how youth and/or adults secure their test preparation (AHSEP, HSEP, adult preparation programs, unfunded programs, community programs, private training centers, at home preparation) or have no test preparation, all are GED test candidates and are provided with test services through ACCES's GED Testing Office.

The GED Testing Office is funded through State general funds which were reduced to \$2.4 million for fiscal year 2010-11, a 40% cut in state funds since 2008-09. However, during the current State fiscal year, DOB provided one-time approval to spend

up to \$650,000 from the revenue account and up to \$1 million from the Education Assessment Account, in addition to the \$2.4 million State allocation.

Costs to administer the GED test fall in to three major categories:

1. The Department maintains a statewide contract with the American Council on Education (ACE) which owns the GED test, provides test materials and scoring information, charges per site and test fees, and has other mandatory requirements for the administration of the GED.
2. The Department scores the GED for all test takers, maintains records, provides customer services, issues diplomas and transcripts, and conducts training for test centers.
3. The Department supports the actual test administration centers across the State. For NYC test takers, the GED Testing Office supports seven contracts with about 22 sites at NYCDOE buildings, CUNY, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs). For Rest of State (ROS), the GED Testing Unit maintains 45 contracts for about 112 testing sites in BOCES and school districts. Each contract provides for a \$20 reimbursement to the testing site for each GED test administered.

The \$20 per test taker reimbursement to the testing sites may need to be suspended again if the Regents Budget Priority Request of \$700,000 is not approved and if any amounts remaining from this year's one-time approval to spend up to an additional \$1.65 million from the revenue and the Education Assessment accounts are not re-appropriated. If we suspend or otherwise reduce reimbursements, we would expect a significant reduction to GED testing opportunities for both adult and youth test takers in New York State.

GED Testing Eligibility Requirements

In New York State, the minimum age to take the GED test is 19; however, persons under 19 years of age can sit for the GED if they are recommended from an approved AHSEP or HSEP program or meet any of the following criteria:

- Accepted into the United States Armed Forces or college (16, 17, & 18 year olds);
- Out of school a year (17 & 18 year olds);
- High School class has graduated (17 & 18 year olds);
- Enrolled in Job Corp (17 & 18 year olds);
- Incarcerated (17 & 18 year olds);
- Home schooled (17 & 18 year olds);
- Adjudicated youth (17 & 18 year olds).

Although there are SED and ACE eligibility requirements, indicated above, to take the GED, anyone may choose to take the test without demonstrating test readiness. However, students enrolled in Adult Education funded GED preparation programs must have taken the OPT and scored with a 410 on each subtest and a 2500 total score to be officially referred to a GED testing site. AHSEP and HSEP students must be teacher recommended.

See Attachment B for GED test takers and test preparation.

In 2008, New York State provided opportunities for the nation's largest number of students and adults to earn a high school equivalency diploma by conducting over 58,000 GED test administrations. In 2009, New York administered 55,589 tests, just slightly behind California. New York also has the greatest number of testing centers which provide access for our diverse student population. No one is charged a fee to take the GED test and those over 19 are not required to meet readiness prerequisites. The Department supports these opportunities by being one of only two states that do not charge a test taking fee or require readiness prerequisites. These enhanced opportunities, however, have contributed to NYS funding issues and having one of the lowest GED pass rates in the nation.

GED Testing Data

ACCES's GED Testing Office maintains data and testing records on all NYS test candidates and issues the NYS High School Equivalency Diploma for successful test takers. Test takers from all coded prep programs need to submit a TAF (Test Authorization Form) which allows the office to track the pass rate for test candidates from these programs.

See Attachments C, D, and E for reported data on GED test takers.

The majority of GED test takers in New York State are adults 21 years of age or older. In 2009, New York State had 24,690 (42%) test takers who were 16 – 20 years old and 34,759 (58%) who were 21 or over. However, younger test takers have higher pass rates than older adult test takers. Younger test takers have been in school more recently and are required to be in AHSEP or HSEP programs as a condition for testing. The majority of our older test takers sit for the GED test without first taking any GED preparation program.

Potential Next Steps

1. Determine how to best align the data systems for AHSEP and HSEP students and adult GED test takers with the P-20 system.

2. Stabilize the GED Testing budget to ensure that testing opportunities are sufficiently funded and available to AHSEP, HSEP, and Adult students. Identify funding strategies to support effective approaches and GED testing opportunities under the current GED test and for the planned 2014 GED test which will be aligned to the common core standards.
3. Develop greater incentives for districts that are successful in having an AHSEP/HSEP student secure a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma and transition into the workforce or into postsecondary training and/or education.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the P-12 Education and ACCES Committees continue to discuss the responsibilities of P-12 Education and ACCES as they relate to students leaving school without a credential and their transition in to Alternative programs and on to adult education services in order to achieve an equivalency diploma by passing the GED test or other avenues. This discussion should explore incentives to keep more young adults in school, transition more students in to alternative programs including enhanced service capacity and incentives, improved data input, management and communication, and facilitated transition planning to adult services, post-secondary education and employment.

Alternative High School Students, NYC and ROS

Year	NYC or ROS	Prep Prog. Type	Enrollment	Students w/ Disabilities		Returned to Secondary Program		Passed the GED Test		Passed after Failing		Dropped Out	
2007													
	NYC	AHSEP	8450	993	12%	1096	13%	1107	13%	141	2%	1769	21%
	NYC	HSE	10011	381	4%	302	3%	1617	16%	150	1%	3423	34%
TOTALS NYC			18461	1374	7%	1398	8%	2724	15%	291	2%	5192	28%
	ROS	AHSEP	12572	2841	23%	345	3%	3049	24%	345	3%	1742	14%
	ROS	HSE	7185	891	12%	79	1%	1233	17%	114	2%	2075	29%
TOTALS ROS			19757	3732	19%	424	2%	4282	22%	459	2%	3817	19%
TOTAL NYS 2007			38,218	5,106	13%	1,822	5%	7,006	18%	750	2%	9,009	24%
2008													
	NYC	AHSEP	10099	907	9%	1039	10%	1991	20%	168	2%	3243	32%
	NYC	HSE	8913	608	7%	106	1%	988	11%	107	1%	3277	37%
TOTALS NYC			19012	1515	8%	1145	6%	2979	16%	275	1%	6520	34%
	ROS	AHSEP	11856	2562	22%	496	4%	2805	24%	322	3%	2223	19%
	ROS	HSE	8761	1125	13%	116	1%	1231	14%	127	1%	2363	27%
TOTALS ROS			20617	3687	18%	612	3%	4036	20%	449	2%	4586	22%
TOTAL NYS 2008			39,629	5,202	13%	1,757	4%	7,015	18%	724	2%	11,106	28%
2009													
	NYC	AHSEP	5912	1060	18%	1009	17%	1395	24%	138	2%	1055	18%
	NYC	HSE	6698	858	13%	35	1%	1042	16%	74	1%	2402	36%
TOTALS NYC			12610	1918	15%	1044	8%	2437	19%	212	2%	3457	27%
	ROS	AHSEP	12353	2844	23%	612	5%	2700	22%	301	2%	2092	17%
	ROS	HSE	6845	1087	16%	60	1%	951	14%	80	1%	1947	28%
TOTALS ROS			19198	3931	20%	672	4%	3651	19%	381	2%	4039	21%
TOTAL NYS 2009			31,808	5,849	18%	1,716	5%	6,088	19%	593	2%	7,496	24%

New York State GED Test Takers and Test Preparation

The GED Testing Office is part of the Adult Education Programs and Policy (AEPP) Office within ACCES and works closely with the Student Support Services Office in P-12 Education since its GED test takers come from both adult education programs and from P-12 AHSEP and HSEP programs. In addition, the GED Testing Office also works with the many GED testing candidates who are not associated with any type of preparation program. Most GED test takers in New York State take the test without any reported preparation.

New York State GED Test takers fall into three categories:

1. **Students referred by Department funded preparation programs.** Some test takers are officially referred by Department funded programs after passing an Official Practice Test (OPT) that confirms their readiness. Most ASHEP and HSEP students are included in this group since they are deemed ready for the GED test by their instructors. All official referrals include a Testing Authorization Form (TAF) that provides student demographics and shows readiness by indicating that the student has passed the Official Practice Test at the minimum level suggested by the American Council on Education.
2. **Students referred by preparation programs not funded by the Department.** Unfunded preparation programs, although coded and tracked, are not screened by the Department for effectiveness. As a result, we do not have a clear picture of the effectiveness of these programs. Approximately 33 percent of test takers came from one of these two types of preparation programs. The statewide pass rate for this group of students who come from some type of preparation program is 66%.
3. **Students self-referred (walk-in students).** About 67 percent of New York's test takers are not officially referred by SED coded preparation programs. The pass rates for these test takers are far below rates for students from Department funded preparation programs. The statewide pass rate for this group of students who do not come from some type of GED preparation program is just 44%.

Number of GED Test Takers and Pass Rate

		<u>Number Tested</u>	<u>Pass Rate</u>
2009	Statewide	55,589	53%
	NYC	29,452	43%
	ROS	26,137	63%
2008	Statewide	58,144	58%
	NYC	31,331	49.7%
	ROS	26,813	67%
2007	Statewide	53,925	57%
	NYC	27,019	49%
	ROS	26,906	66%

Pass Rates for GED Test Takers Prep Programs vs. Non-Prep

		<u>Statewide</u>	<u>NYC</u>	<u>ROS</u>
2009	Prep	66%	60%	70%
	Non-Prep	44%	36%	54%
	Overall	53%	43%	63%
2008	Prep	70%	65%	73%
	Non-Prep	50%	42%	61%
	Overall	58%	49.7%	67%
2007	Prep	67%	60%	73%
	Non-Prep	49%	42%	60%
	Overall	57%	49%	66%

Number of Testers and Pass Rates by Age

<u>Age</u>		<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>
16	Statewide	526 (69%)	592 (73%)	755 (74%)
	NYC	64 (56%)	73 (64%)	126 (64%)
	ROS	463 (71%)	520 (74%)	630 (77%)
17	Statewide	4,418 (72%)	5,255 (75%)	5,610 (75%)
	NYC	1,452 (69%)	1,874 (74%)	2,106 (75%)
	ROS	2,955 (73%)	3,374 (75%)	3,506 (75%)
18	Statewide	6,904 (64%)	7,593 (68%)	7,494 (69%)
	NYC	3,004 (59%)	3,414 (65%)	3,218 (65%)
	ROS	3,854 (68%)	4,161 (71%)	4,261 (71%)
19	Statewide	7,355 (55%)	7,664 (61%)	7,149 (60%)
	NYC	3,699 (49%)	3,989 (56%)	3,403 (54%)
	ROS	6,618 (61%)	3,637 (67%)	3,744 (66%)
20	Statewide	5,487 (50%)	5,531 (54%)	4,944 (55%)
	NYC	3,064 (43%)	3,070 (47%)	2,558 (49%)
	ROS	2,393 (58%)	2,447 (63%)	2,377 (60%)
21+	Statewide	34,759 (42%)	35,063 (47%)	31,205 (47%)
	NYC	20,248 (34%)	20,994 (39%)	17,378 (39%)
	ROS	14,375 (35%)	13,967 (59%)	13,729 (57%)

Number of Testers and Pass Rates by Reported Ethnicity

<u>Ethnicity</u>		<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>
White	Statewide	17,173 (62%)	17,859 (67%)	18,025 (66%)
	NYC	2,685 (56%)	2,844 (62%)	2,737 (60%)
	ROS	14,430 (64%)	15,013 (68%)	15,288 (68%)
African American	Statewide	21,646 (33%)	23,025 (38%)	20,311 (39%)
	NYC	13,963 (29%)	15,432 (35%)	12,664 (36%)
	ROS	7,681 (39%)	7,593 (44%)	7,643 (43%)
Hispanic	Statewide	15,665 (39%)	16,300 (44%)	14,920 (43%)
	NYC	11,510 (38%)	12,421 (41%)	10,853 (40%)
	ROS	4,150 (43%)	3,879 (50%)	4,110 (49%)
Asian	Statewide	2,072 (42%)	1,950 (48%)	1,799 (51%)
	NYC	1,728 (42%)	1,623 (48%)	1,469 (51%)
	ROS	344 (42%)	327 (53%)	330 (52%)
American Indian/ Alaska Native	Statewide	507 (46%)	546 (52%)	566 (50%)
	NYC	153 (29%)	156 (24%)	152 (31%)
	ROS	354 (54%)	390 (64%)	414 (57%)
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Statewide	198 (30%)	285 (36%)	308 (33%)
	NYC	151 (32%)	228 (33%)	258 (32%)
	ROS	47 (23%)	57(49%)	50 (40%)
Other	Statewide	4,671 (49%)	4,581 (54%)	4,042 (55%)
	NYC	2,832 (45%)	2,913 (51%)	2,376 (52%)
	ROS	1,833 (56%)	1,668 (60%)	1,667 (59%)