




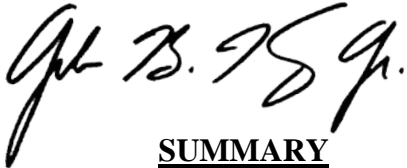
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: Adult Career and Continuing Education Services Committee

FROM: Kevin Smith 

SUBJECT: Raising College and Career Readiness for Adults Using Multiple Pathways to a NYS High School Equivalency Diploma

DATE: August 26, 2012

AUTHORIZATION(S): 
SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

Given the significant changes being made by Pearson/GED® Testing Service to the GED® test in January 2014 should the Department issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to identify one or more State assessments that would lead to a High School Equivalency Diploma so that multiple pathways are available? The Department will also provide an update on initial steps to transition the adult education system to college and career ready standards.

Reason(s) for Consideration

The GED® test is the primary method to achieve a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma. However with the changes in the administration and content of the GED® test beginning in January 2014, as well as the increased fee that has been announced by GED® Testing Service, additional tests that provide an appropriately rigorous assessment for a High School Equivalency Diploma at a reasonable price are needed. In addition, as the P-12 system moves towards common core the adult education services should also ultimately align with Common Core Learning Standards.¹

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the Board at the September ACCES Committee meeting.

¹ Approximately 45,000 – 50,000 students take the GED® test in New York State each year. Sixty percent of test candidates are 21 years old or over, and 63% come from the New York metropolitan area.

Procedural History

In October 2011, the ACCES Committee was informed of developments to the GED® test which raise concerns regarding the State's reliance on the test as the primary pathway to a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma. In February 2012, the Committee discussed alternative pathways to a High School Equivalency Diploma. An update was provided at a joint meeting of the P-12 Education Committee and the ACCES Committee at the April 2012 meeting.

Background Information

Based on cost, accessibility, and content concerns of the 2014 GED® test, NYSED has explored multiple pathways to a High School Equivalency Diploma. Actions taken include:

- Led work with other states on the GED® Options Workgroup and professional associations to explore and develop alternative and multiple pathways.
- Issued a Request for Information (RFI) in March 2012 to see what products and programs may be available that align with the current GED® test and then evolve to raise college and career readiness over time. Information has been submitted by McGraw Hill as well as the Educational Testing Service working in partnership with the Iowa Testing Program. Pearson/ GED® Testing Service also responded, proposing that New York rely on the new 2014 GED® test.
- The Department has also taken steps to maintain the National External Diploma Program (NEDP) as a pathway to a Local High School Equivalency Diploma.

As discussed with the Board in the past, GED® Testing Service plans to offer a new common core aligned GED® exam in January 2014 that will be delivered solely through computer based testing. The State currently funds 100% of the High School Equivalency (HSE) exam. The total program costs are approximately \$3.6 million and cover the cost of the exam, the testing centers and the department's operations. GED® Testing Service has already announced that the new computerized GED® test will cost \$120 per test in 2014, more than twice the current cost. If the structure of the current program does not change then additional funding of an estimated \$3.6 million would be needed on an annual basis to support the same number of test takers. Or, the number of test takers would be reduced from about 50,000 to 25,000.

There is a statutory² prohibition on charging an admission fee to the GED® test and there is currently no enforceable readiness requirement prior to taking the exam. New York's current pass rate for the GED® (59.4%) is one of the lowest in the nation³. The national average is 72.4%.

² Education Law Section 317

³ New York is the only State in the nation which does not charge for the GED® test AND does not require test takers to demonstrate some form of readiness before taking the GED® test. The pass rate for students who successfully complete GED® prep courses in New York is 71%. The pass rate for students who do not take prep classes is 49%.

Recommendations

Consistent with past feedback from the Board, the Department is recommending a number of actions to ensure that adult learners have multiple options for rigorous and reliable high school equivalency assessments in the most cost effective manner. This includes:

- **RFP for a state subsidized HSE exam.** Develop and issue a RFP that will allow the State to choose a state subsidized test vendor that will be able to provide a HSE exam that leads to a New York State HSE Diploma. The RFP would cover the period January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016. The State would enter into a contract with the winning vendor to pay for the delivery and administration of the test in New York. The test vendor will need to either (a) provide two indicators of student performance against the Common Core Standards: (1) the level of performance required to pass the current GED®, which is set at scores equal to or higher than those earned by the top 60 percent of graduating high school seniors⁴ and (2) the level of performance that would predict that the test taker could successfully enroll in and earn a C or better in credit-bearing college courses in the relevant subject; or (b) demonstrate a full phase-in to the Common Core standards over the three years such that in the 3rd year the vendor can provide the two indicators referenced in (a) above. The test will be administered and scored by the vendor. While the vendor may offer the test in a computerized format, they must also offer a paper version of the test. At the end of the term of the RFP, the State could issue a new RFP.
- **State Subsidy.** A state subsidy would be provided for the HSE exam selected through the competitive RFP process. The uniform subsidy would be based on the amount of funding provided in the State budget. If the cost of the HSE exam exceeded the state subsidy the test taker would be responsible for the remainder. This would require repeal of the law that prohibits a test taker fee. The number of test takers would need to be monitored closely to ensure that sufficient funds will be available.
- **RFQ for Other SED recognized non-subsidized HSE assessments.** Allow other assessments to be approved by the Department as an alternative pathway to a HSE Diploma. SED would issue a RFQ through which educational assessments which can demonstrate their alignment with current GED® standards or the Common Core would be approved by SED through a review by an independent expert panel of nationally recognized educational assessment specialists.
- **Continue leadership in national workgroup.** The Department will continue to work with other states to identify GED® test options and share curricula and instructional strategies linked to Common Core Learning Standards. New York and Massachusetts co-chair a GED® Options workgroup of 25 states as part of the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education to share plans for alternative pathways. A subgroup that will be co-chaired by New York and Kentucky, including participation by the U.S. Education Department's Office of Adult and Vocational Education (OVAE), will share and adapt instructional lessons and practice related to college and career ready standards.

⁴ 2010 GED® Testing Program Statistical Report - page 3

- Support Adult Common Core Instruction. As the adult education learning system transitions to a common core aligned assessment it is imperative that instruction is also aligned similar to the thoughtful multi-year roll-out in the P-12 system. The Department will develop a plan to integrate adult education instruction into the training and professional development that is currently provided to K-12. The plan will start with training the Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) Directors and subsequently instructors in the field. WIA staff development funds (RAEN contracts) will be competitively awarded beginning July 1, 2014 to support training on multiple pathways, college and career readiness milestones, and the development and adaptation of adult education instruction around Common Core Learning Standards.
- Continue Outreach to “near passers”. The Department will continue to alert those students who have passed parts but not the entire test that they will need to retake the entire test if they wait until January 1, 2014. SED is already partnering with the NYC Council to provide New York City residents with information about GED® preparation programs and testing dates. A similar outreach will be made to former test takers in the rest of the State. Since January 2012 SED has also been inserting notices to testers who fail the GED® test that inform them of the December 31, 2013 deadline. GED® Testing Service is also planning a promotional campaign to inform the public of the changes to the test. NYSED will use materials from GED® Testing Service as appropriate.

Proposed Timeline

The proposed timeframe recognizes that systemic change for an adult education system with severely limited resources can only be achieved on a multi-year basis.

<p>September 2012 through December 2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and issue RFP for a State High School Equivalency Test • Develop and issue RFQ for other approved assessments • Create expert panel which will review RFQ assessments • Continue outreach to GED ® test takers who have not completed the current GED ® test. • Begin professional development for adult education around Common Core Learning Standards. • Continue to work with the national GED ® Options Workgroup • Revise regulations as needed.
<p>January 2013 through December 2013</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award contract to RFP vendor • Expert panel reviews RFQ submissions • Provide comprehensive staff development to adult education program managers, teachers and counselors on multiple pathways • Retool SED’s GED® Testing Office and test administration system to ensure security testing, data reporting, issuance of NYS High School Equivalency Diploma • Continue to work with the national GED ® Options Workgroup

January 2014 through January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise college and career readiness standards on approved pathways to a NYS HSE Diploma with appropriate staff development and instruction.• Work with the national GED® Options Workgroup and other experts to share adult education common core aligned instructional practice.• Competitively bid federal adult education staff development funds (RAEN contract) to provide training on Common Core Learning Standards• Use the P-20 Longitudinal Student Data System to analyze and assess the long-term effectiveness of efforts to raise college and career readiness• Adopt Common Core Learning Standards and fully align NYS HSE diploma assessments by January 1, 2017
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