



TO: Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Committee

FROM: Kevin G. Smith *KG Smith*

SUBJECT: Update on the new High School Equivalency exam - Test Assessing Secondary Completion™ (TASC)

DATE: May 11, 2015

AUTHORIZATION(S): *Eugene P Berlin*

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

To provide the Committee with an update on the implementation of the Test Assessing Secondary Completion™ (TASC) for High School Equivalency (HSE).

Reason(s) for Consideration

To inform the Board of recent developments on implementation of the HSE exam.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Committee at its May 2015 meeting.

Procedural History

In October 2011, the ACCES Committee was informed of changes to the GED® test that raised concerns regarding the State's reliance on the test as the primary pathway to a New York State HSE Diploma. In February 2012, the Committee discussed alternative pathways to a HSE Diploma. An update was provided at a joint meeting of the P-12 Education Committee and the ACCES Committee at the April 2012 meeting. At the September 2012 ACCES Committee meeting, the Board of Regents agreed to issue a Request For Proposal (RFP) for a new HSE test, provide multiple pathways to a HSE Diploma, and transition the adult education system to Common Core and career/college readiness. Updates were provided at the November 2012,

February 2013, June 2013, and September 2013 ACCES Committee meetings. In December 2013, the Regents approved an amendment to section 100.7 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education to permit acceptance of passing scores on one or more subtests of the 2002-2013 GED[®] examination for the corresponding subtest on the TASC. The Board was last informed on the State's progress with the new HSE test at the Board's February 2015 meeting, when the Board received an update on the first year of implementation of the new test.

Background Information

The March 2011 decision by GED Testing Service (GEDTS) that a new GED[®] test beginning in 2014, would be fully aligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS), available only on computer, and double the cost of the 2002-2013 GED[®] test, led the Board of Regents in September 2012 to request the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to issue an RFP for a new HSE test.

On November 28, 2012, an RFP was issued that required vendors to produce an HSE test that would gradually phase in national college and career readiness standards and computer based testing (CBT) over a three-year period. On March 7, 2013, Education Commissioner John King announced that the winning bidder was CTB/McGraw-Hill with TASC. The TASC is comprised of five subtests (Reading, Writing, Science, Social Studies, and Math) and most items are multiple choice. There are also gridded-response items, and a few short constructed-response items and a written essay for the Writing Subtest. The cost of the TASC Test is \$10.40 per subtest (\$52 for the full battery), which is significantly less expensive than the \$120 for the full battery of 2014 Series GED[®] test.

New York State was the first state in the country to issue and award an RFP for a HSE test other than the GED[®]. Today, 21 states across the country have chosen options either in place of or in addition to the GED[®] test to help students earn their state-issued HSE certificate.

TASC Implementation

To prepare for a statewide January 2014 implementation of the new HSE exam, the NYSED has met regularly with CTB/McGraw-Hill on the development and implementation of the new test. Beginning January 2014, New York State began administering the TASC Forms A, B, and C. In mid-March 2015, testing on Forms A, B, and C ceased as new Forms D, E, and F were finalized for testing by the end of March. Also in March, CTB/McGraw-Hill launched a new computerized registration and scheduling system to help ensure accurate data collection and the equitable distribution of test forms.

CTB/McGraw-Hill is completing its state and national analysis of the data on Forms A, B, and C. Preliminary information on pass rates was provided at the February 2015 ACCES Committee meeting.

Training and Preparation

To support our instructors of adult education and test centers administering the TASC, NYSED, in conjunction with CTB/McGraw-Hill, has been providing regional training and informational webinars and communicating with test centers on the annual developments with the TASC test. On five separate dates in late February and early March, NYSED staff conducted test examiner training in Albany, New York City, and Syracuse. In addition, a video conference that was transmitted to five locations (NYC, Westbury, Auburn, Rochester, and Angola) was conducted in late March. NYSED has also encouraged test centers to participate in training webinars conducted by CTB/McGraw-Hill. In February, CTB/McGraw-Hill held webinars on the following: the new registration/scheduling system; the new barcoding system; paper-based test training; CBT training; the accommodations process; and the return of Forms A, B, and C. Those webinars were recorded and are posted on NYSED's website. CTB/McGraw-Hill has also provided short, interactive "Lunch and Learn" webinars that allow test examiners to seek guidance and pose questions to CTB/McGraw-Hill.

In addition, NYSED has faced the challenge of preparing 5,500 adult education instructors to teach to the national career/college readiness standards. In 2014, we contracted with the City University of New York (CUNY) to have their math and English language arts (ELA) content experts provide two Common Core Institutes in ELA and math for Master Teachers from every region of the state. These Master Teachers then worked with Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) center directors to provide this information and national standards training in their regions. The first 2014 Institute focused on providing foundational knowledge for both ELA and math. The second 2014 Institute consisted of two concurrent sessions for ELA and math, with the ELA session contextualized for teaching social studies.

In 2015, contracted through CUNY, in-depth and focused training has continued in science and math. In January 2015, thirty Master Teachers were trained in high-emphasis science concepts, and in March 2015, another thirty received professional development in math, which is the TASC subtest that is the most challenging for New York State examinees to pass. These Master Teachers are working with the RAEN center directors to provide this information and national standards training in their regions. To date, over one thousand adult education teachers have received training on instructional approaches from the Master Teachers.

To provide needed support to implement the career/college readiness standards and prepare examinees for the new academic expectations for the TASC, two new websites have been launched. The first, created by our partners at CUNY, is www.CollectEDny.org. This website provides teachers with a peer reviewed process for identifying effective learning resources for background knowledge and classroom instruction. Each learning resource has been rated by a content specialist. All New York State adult educators may rate the effectiveness of the materials and provide input. Since its launch in January, the site has over 2,000 views. The second, in partnership with Cayuga Community College, is www.TeachingtotheCoreNY.org. This is a web portal intended as a one-stop site to connect adult education teachers with

instructional resources, instructional videos, and training opportunities for Common Core and TASC success.

Test Centers

In 2007, NYSED issued an RFP to provide funding to HSE test centers to offset the cost of administering the test to the public. While some test centers (e.g. prisons, residential facilities) test only their own examinees, other test centers test their own examinees and also open their doors to the public. The public test centers applied for reimbursement through the RFP. Contracts awarded through the 2007 RFP were extended through 2014. A new RFP for 2015 and 2016 was released in the fall of 2014. Unfortunately, upon reviewing and scoring the RFP, NYSED realized that the outcome would have resulted in awards that would have reduced the number of test centers and limited geographic diversity of testing sites. Consequently, the RFP was recalled and contracts were extended to existing contract holders while NYSED drafts a new RFP that will take effect in 2016.

Transition to the TASC has placed additional expectations on the test centers. To mitigate the issue New York State chose a simplified registration process in year one. We are now implementing a full registration that will result in more accurate data and diagnostics. Currently, the responsibility for data entry is with test center staff. CTB/McGraw-Hill has developed a fully electronic system that will allow test candidates to process their own registration. However, until that self-registration system has been fully vetted, likely in a year, test centers are expected to do more.

Understandably, test centers are reassessing their capacity to offer testing. Unfortunately, a few test centers have informed NYSED that they decided not to extend their reimbursement contract and indicated that they would no longer provide TASC testing to the public. These centers have stated that CTB/McGraw-Hill's new registration and scheduling systems have placed a significant additional burden on their test centers and have increased the cost to the point where, unless they receive additional resources, they can no longer offer, or can offer only on a limited basis, the test to the public, even though this year the State was able to increase the base reimbursement rate from \$20 to \$25 per tester. Some would like to continue to test their own adult education examinees, but will forgo the state reimbursement that comes with public testing.

NYSED has worked closely with these centers to negotiate a solution which will offer limited public test access through June 2015. Staff is analyzing the test capacity to assure an adequate number of test seats that are accessible throughout the state. We will continue to seek solutions that will maintain the viability of the test center structure.

Looking Forward

The first year of the new HSE has been a success; however, our work is not done. The NYSED continues to face challenges in supporting this new, more rigorous national test that measures career/college readiness standards. In the following year, NYSED staff will focus on the following:

- Increasing Computer Based Testing: The RFP allowed for a gradual phase in to CBT, with up to 20% of tests being provided on computer in 2014, up to 40% in 2016 and up to 60% in 2016. Currently we have only 32 test sites that provide CBT.
- Supporting Form DEF Test Administration: NYSED staff will continue to work with CTB/McGraw-Hill to support the implementation of the new series. NYSED works hand-in-hand with test centers and CTB/McGraw-Hill to resolve test administration issues as they occur. CTB/McGraw-Hill continues to hold webinar trainings to address implementation issues and NYSED staff provides input and guidance to ensure New York's issues are addressed.
- Increasing Understanding of Career/College Readiness Standards: NYSED staff expects to continue to work with CUNY, on preparing Master Teachers on career/college readiness standards, and with RAEN centers and other partners to provide this training in each region of the state. The resource websites previously identified will be further developed. As teachers become more knowledgeable about the Standards, our examinees are better prepared for the assessment and better prepared for the college or career experience ahead.
- Reimbursing Test Centers Appropriately: NYSED staff is restructuring the next test center RFP to ensure that the construction supports the changes in the delivery of the HSE assessment and to ensure that test centers are adequately reimbursed for their work.
- Collaborating with CTB/McGraw-Hill: NYSED will continue to collaborate with CTB/McGraw-Hill on the TASC to ensure alignment to the standards, rigor and construction of assessment items, the appropriateness of the assessment for the adult examinee and other substantial content issues.