



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

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

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SUBJECT: National External Diploma Program

DATE: November 9, 2015

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SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The National External Diploma Program (NEDP) is a program through which participants show their proficiency in competencies that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. The program has the potential to benefit many more individuals in New York State who are seeking a high school diploma. Staff will provide an overview of the NEDP, including New York State's current use of the program. The Committee will provide the Board with recommended next steps for maximizing the potential of how the program may be used throughout the State.

Reason(s) for Consideration

For information.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the Board of Regents P-12 Education and Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Joint Committee for discussion at the November 2015 meeting.

Procedural History

The authorization of the NEDP as a local High School Equivalency Diploma was first adopted at the November 1984 Regents meeting which added Section 100.8 as part of a new Part 100. The new regulation allowed boards of education to award a local high school equivalency diploma based upon experimental programs approved by the Commissioner and was made effective **September 1, 1985**.

At the July 1999 Regents meeting, Section 100.8 was amended to establish a sunset date of **January 31, 2005** “after which date such boards may no longer award a local high school equivalency diploma.”

At the November 2004 Regents meeting, section 100.8 was amended to extend the sunset date to **January 31, 2008**.

At the January 2008 Regents meeting, the sunset date was extended to **June 30, 2011** to ensure consistency with another, contemporary amendment to Commissioner's Regulation Section 100.5 that extended the ability for school districts to issue local diplomas through June 30, 2011.

At the May 2011 Regents meeting (emergency action) and the June 2011 Regents meeting (permanent adoption), the sunset date was extended to **June 30, 2012**.

At the April 2012 Regents meeting, the sunset date was extended to **June 30, 2013**.

At the April 2013 Regents meeting, the sunset date was extended to **June 30, 2015**.

At the March 2015 Regents meeting, the sunset date was extended to **June 30, 2017**.

Background Information

History of NEDP

The NEDP is an applied performance assessment system administered by Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) for adults and out-of-school youth who are seeking a high school diploma. It debuted in Syracuse, NY in 1975 and was initially validated by USDOE for national dissemination in 1979. To complete the program, participants must demonstrate mastery of skills for success in postsecondary education and the workplace. In addition to New York State, NEDP is currently used in Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Indiana, Maryland, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Washington. It is offered by 83 agencies nationwide, resulting in a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. Currently, the lowest age of

participation in NEDP is 18; however, participating states (and regions) may set their own minimum age requirements. CASAS requires that all participants are out-of-school youth or adults.

How Does NEDP Work?

To participate in NEDP in New York State, NYSED mandates NEDP applicants to receive a minimum score of 9.0 on the math and reading sections of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), a national adult education examination provided by Data Recognition Corporation (the same vendor for New York State's TASC High School Equivalency Test). Before beginning the NEDP generalized assessment process, CASAS also mandates that a student must complete three diagnostic tests in math, reading, and writing. In order to move forward with NEDP, students must score at the 9th grade level on these assessments.

In lieu of taking traditional paper-and-pencil standardized exams, NEDP participants meet one-on-one with an assigned trained practitioner in order to demonstrate mastery of 70 competencies across 10 content areas via a variety of performance tasks completed at home and through in-office visits and competency progress reports. The assessment portion of the program is entirely web-based. NEDP competencies are academic and life skills acquired through life and work experiences, and are clustered into the following content areas: Communication and Media Literacy, Applied Math/Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology, Cultural Literacy, Health Literacy, Civic Literacy and Community Participation, Geography and History, Consumer Awareness and Financial Literacy, Science, and Twenty-First Century Workplace. While CASAS reports that many participants complete the program in six months, the average time to complete is about one year.

While the NEDP is non-traditional in many ways: it is a highly structured, criterion-referenced assessment in which participants must achieve 100% mastery across all areas. The self-paced, flexible study and assessment schedule make it ideal for adult learners, easing the burden of studying, familial, and work obligations. The 1199 Service Employees International Union (SIEU), a major user of and advocate for NEDP in New York State, reports that the assessment serves populations typically underserved in other high school diploma programs. English Language Learners also benefit from NEDP, as they may be proficient in their native language but unable to master the highly specific content knowledge (such as U.S. History) needed to succeed on a high school Regents Exam or High School Equivalency exam. Special needs students are also served by NEDP, as they are able to set their own pace and demonstrate incremental progress over the course of the program rather than the "all-or-nothing" option of a high stakes assessment.

Current Use in New York State

Currently in New York State NEDP does not lead to a State Equivalency Diploma under CR 100.7, but rather a Local Equivalency Diploma under CR 100.8.

In New York State, students must be at least 21 years and over, although some agencies require participants to be older. As described above, this age requirement is set forth by New York State, and other participating states allow students to be as young as 18 years of age.

The total number of NEDP participants annually in New York State is around 1,000; this low figure may be reflective of the fact that the 24 NEDP locations are not evenly distributed throughout the State (see Figure 1). About 500 students graduate annually. For specific numbers of enrollees and graduates from 2007–2014, please refer to Table 1.

Figure 1. NEDP agency locations in New York State

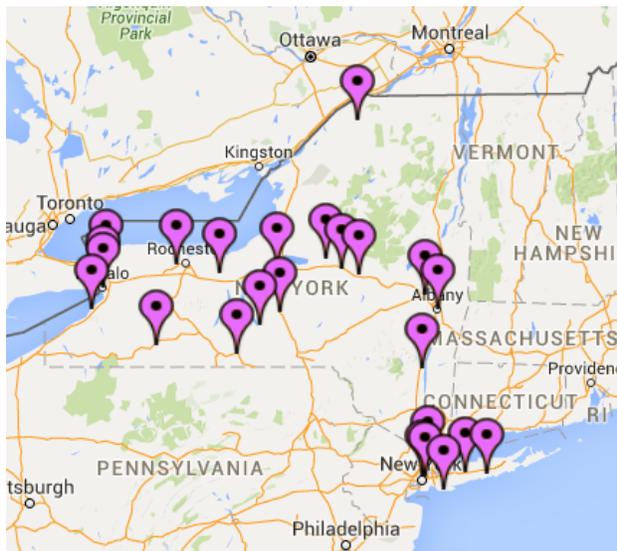


Table 1. Number of NEDP participants in New York State

| Year | Enrolled | Graduated |
|------|----------|-----------|
| 2007 | 1,017 | 435 |
| 2008 | 834 | 385 |
| 2009 | 985 | 448 |
| 2010 | 1,127 | 550 |
| 2011 | 1,134 | 592 |
| 2012 | 1,072 | 514 |
| 2013 | 965 | 476 |

Viability for High School Equivalency

CASAS has worked with nationally recognized consultants to align the competencies and performance tasks of NEDP with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. The use of performance-based, individualized assessment strategies make NEDP a

viable option for students who may not be successful in traditional educational assessment contexts. As described above, while New York State does not include NEDP under CR 100.7, there are other participating states that do grant a state diploma to participants who complete the NEDP.

While high school equivalency programs preparing students for HSE exams traditionally have poor retention rates, the retention rate for NEDP is high (over 80% nationwide), thereby providing additional evidence for its continued and increased use as a pathway toward an HSE credential. Additionally, NEDP is appropriate for and frequently used by English Language Learners and special needs learners, and provides them with a viable alternative to timed, high-stress testing environments. NEDP competencies are accessible and relevant to learners preparing for the workforce, most notably under the “Twenty-first Century Workplace Skills” component of the NEDP program. These include the assessment of competencies such as comparing the skills that are required for specific occupations, and presenting clear and convincing information for a job interview.

New York State has a number of organizations that make substantial use of NEDP as an alternate method of obtaining a high school equivalency diploma; most notably 1199 SEIU, which recognizes that the NEDP offers an innovative and flexible learning program through which its members may obtain a better job or advance in a career that provides family-sustaining wages. Furthermore, NEDP fits in with the career pathway goals of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, as it prepares graduates with the ability to enter the workforce, upgrade skills, or advance in a career.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board direct the Department to:

- Investigate the benefits and limitations of amending the Commissioner’s Regulations such that NEDP would result in a State high school equivalency diploma (as governed by CR 100.7), rather than a local high school equivalency diploma (as governed by CR 100.8). Such a change may result in added legitimacy for the NEDP diploma in the eyes of employers and educational institutions and a resulting increase in enrollment in the program.
- Investigate the benefits and limitations of amending the Department’s minimum age of participation in New York State from 21 to 18 to allow for increased enrollment in the NEDP program and to decrease the potential gap between when a student leaves high school and can subsequently begin an NEDP program.

At a future meeting, the Department will bring recommendations to the Board on these two issues, including possible changes to the Commissioner’s Regulations and possible additional uses for the NEDP program in New York State.