






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

FROM: Kevin G. Smith 
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SUBJECT: Update on the new High School Equivalency exam -
Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC™)

DATE: May 12, 2014

AUTHORIZATION(S): 
SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

To provide the Committee with an update on the transition from the 2002-2013 GED® test to the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC™).

Reason(s) for Consideration

To inform the Board of the successful closeout of the GED® exam and the implementation of the new TASC™.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the joint meeting of the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Committee and the P-12 Education Committee at its May 2014 meeting.

Procedural History

In October 2011, the ACCES Committee was informed of developments to the GED® test which raised concerns regarding the State's reliance on the test as the primary pathway to a New York State High School Equivalency (HSE) Diploma. In February 2012, the Committee discussed alternative pathways to an HSE Diploma and an update was provided in April 2012 at a joint committee meeting of P-12 Education and ACCES. 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 assessments leading to an HSE diploma, and transition the Adult Education system to Common Core State Standards for Career and College Readiness. Further updates were provided at the November 2012, February 2013, June 2013, September 2013, and October 2013 ACCES Committee meetings.

Background Information

In response to the announcement by GED Testing Services (GEDTS) that beginning in 2014 the GED® test would be fully aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), solely offered on the computer, and cost \$120 per test (more than twice the current expense to New York State), the Board of Regents authorized the New York State Education Department (the Department) to issue an RFP to ensure that the State offer an HSE test that is both affordable and accessible, and available in both a computer format and a paper and pencil format. An RFP was issued in November of 2012, and the Department received two bids; one from CTB/McGraw Hill and one from Educational Testing Services. GEDTS informed the Department that they would not submit a bid.

In March 2013, the Commissioner announced that the winning bid was submitted by CTB/McGraw Hill for a new assessment, TASC™ test. The cost of the test is \$52 per test administered in 2014, \$54 in 2015, and \$56 in 2016.

The national TASC™ test is similar to the 2002-2013 (old) GED® test in that it consists of the same five subtest sections: Language Arts - Reading, Language Arts - Writing, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Like the 2002-2013 GED® test, writing and achieving a passing score on an essay is required and the test is typically administered over multiple days. The TASC™ is similar to the 2014 (new) GED® test in that it is a more rigorous exam that measures the CCSS.

TASC™ Implementation

To prepare for a statewide January 2014 implementation of the new high school equivalency exam, the Department has met regularly with CTB/McGraw Hill on the development and implementation of the new test. Much of this work focused on preparing test coordinators, adult educators, and examinees for the changes to processes and procedures as well as for the content and rigor of the assessment. Some of these preparatory activities included:

- Webinars introducing the TASC™ to the adult education field - September 2013
- Webinars on the accommodations - October 2013
- Webinars on changes to the test coordination process - December 2013
- Test administration training, conducted by the Department at 12 locations throughout the State, training over 300 TASC™ examiners covering 269 test centers - December 2013 thru March 2014
- Presentations made by the Department and CTB at numerous conferences and workshops in 2013 and 2014 throughout the State

Other states also selected the TASC™ as their new HSE exam. New York has been collaborating with Indiana and West Virginia, both TASC™ states, on the implementation of the assessment. We have regularly scheduled meetings and discuss items such as implementation of the TASC™ test, training, cut score determination, and the content of the assessment. We also share the Department's work in review of the TASC™ questions. Although this is a national test, Department content staff has reviewed approximately 2,000 CTB/McGraw-Hill questions. Staff reviews questions, and will continue with this review in the future, for:

- Alignment to the standards;
- Rigor of the question;
- Construction of the question;
- Appropriateness for the adult education examinee;
- Grade level alignment; and,
- Other format, editing and presentation concerns.

Other states, with New York, have had the opportunity to provide comment and suggest changes to improve the questions prior to being field tested. CTB balances the feedback received from its state constituents to deliver a national test.

The first TASC™ test was administered on January 21, 2014. While the volume of testing is gradually increasing, the number of HSE tests typically administered during January, February and March 2014 was well below normal. In April 2014, there were 2,321 TASC™ tests administered, approximately ½ of the normal number. A reduction in testing is to be expected when there is a transition to a new HSE exam. The last time the GED® test changed in 2002, the Department saw a 40% drop in tests from the previous year. This year's reduction can be attributed to the huge increase and push by testers to take the GED® test in 2013 before the new, more rigorous 2014 test took effect and apprehension about scheduling and taking the new HSE assessment. As of May 7, 2014, 4,126 TASC™ tests have been administered. The Department is now processing records and the first batch of diplomas/transcripts/failure notices expect to be sent out this week.

GED Closeout

Soon after GEDTS' announcement of the changes to the GED® test, the Department engaged in assisting the field with ensuring that examinees were aware of the end date of 2002-2013 GED® testing and that the field was prepared for the anticipated surge in testing. The Department:

- notified students of the December 31, 2013 deadline for GED® testing;
- inserted notices in students' failure notices beginning in January 2012;
- sent letters to over 4,800 New York City residents who had passed at least three of the five GED® subtests within the previous three years in October 2012;
- mailed a similar letter to 2,700 "near passers" in the rest of the State in November 2012;
- worked with the Fund for Public Advocacy, New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) and the Literacy Assistance Center on a citywide

campaign directed at encouraging 17-24 year old disconnected youth to complete the GED[®] examination before 2014;

- authorized CUNY and other test centers to use 2014 test center reimbursement allocations in 2013 (as long as they reduced their 2014 allocations by the same amount). Consequently, CUNY scheduled additional exam dates providing over 3,000 additional seats; and,
- collaborated with NYCDOE to ensure that additional seats and test sessions were scheduled. By September NYCDOE had reached their allocation for test reimbursement from SED. In anticipation of this surge, NYCDOE was provided additional funding in the city budget to provide additional test dates in 2013. Consequently, NYCDOE scheduled new examination dates (including Sundays) providing over 6,000 additional seats.

The volume of testing significantly increased in 2013. In 2013, there were 78,861 test administrations, a 48% increase over 2012. The 63,259 individuals taking the test in 2013 was the highest number for the 12 years that the 2002-2013 version of the GED[®] test was in existence. (The number of test administrations is higher than the number of individual testers since some people take the test more than once.) In December 2013, there was nearly three times the number of testers (14,379) as the previous year. Despite the large number of people taking the test, the final pass rate (55.7%) was nearly identical to the 12 year average (55.6%). (See attached chart)

Despite this surge, and with thanks to the assistance and planning of other agencies such as NYCDOE and CUNY, the demand for test seats was met with no reports to the Department of individuals closed out of testing.

Nearly one-half of those who took the 2002-2013 GED[®] test did not pass all five subjects and earn their diploma. Those who passed some of the five subtests faced the prospect of losing their successful GED[®] subtest scores and having to pass all five subtests of the new TASC[™] in order to achieve their HSE diploma.

To provide some relief to those who successfully passed one or more of the 2002-2013 GED[®] subtests, in September 2013 the Board approved an amendment to Section 100.7 of the Regulations of the Commissioner to allow a passing score on one or more subtests of the 2002 GED[®] exam to be accepted as a passing score for the corresponding subtest on the TASC[™] for a two year period. The regulation took effect in December of 2013. Unlike New York's decision on the TASC, GEDTS will not recognize passing scores from the 2002 version of the GED to inform passing the new GED exam.

Next steps

The RFP allowed for a gradual phase in to Computer Based Testing (CBT), with up to 20% of tests being provided on computer in 2014, up to 40% in 2015 and up to 60% in 2016. In 2014, SED piloted CBT at 13 test centers. The Department would now like to encourage and support additional CBT for 2015 at the test centers. In the summer of 2014, the Department will be surveying New York test centers to see how many would be willing and able to add CBT. The Department's and CTB/McGraw Hill's approval process for new CBT sites will commence in September 2014, with the

expectation that those sites who meet the requirements will be operating by January 1, 2015.

With the implementation of a new more rigorous national test that measures the CCSS, there is an immediate need to provide enhanced professional development for adult education instructors, teachers and administrators. Most instructors are part-time and are without training and expertise in CCSS. In March 2014, SED hosted a specialized training program developed by CUNY to develop the skills of 62 adult education Master Teachers to both enhance their own teaching skills related to Common Core-based HSE preparation and to develop their skills as trainers to prepare other adult education teachers and instructors. The Department is proposing to expand this program later this year with a particular focus on the CCSS. The Board of Regents made a \$5 Million budget request to support this work, unfortunately it was not funded.

Attachment**2002-2013 New York State GED® Pass Rate**

Test Year	Unique ID Testers	Number Passed	Pass Rate
2002	43,447	22,835	52.6%
2003	50,307	27,795	55.3%
2004	54,245	30,269	55.8%
2005	53,319	30,609	57.4%
2006	52,317	28,457	54.4%
2007	54,087	31,500	58.2%
2008	58,361	33,733	57.8%
2009	55,830	29,276	52.4%
2010	48,685	28,016	57.5%
2011	45,207	26,048	57.6%
2012	45,629	23,786	52.1%
2013	63,259	35,208	55.7%