

Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item



Agenda Item: F

Date: July 24, 2014

Title	First Review of Request for Approval of the 2014 General Educational Development (GED [®]) Testing Program		
Presenter	Dr. Susan M. Clair, Director, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Department of Education Dr. Thomas Brewster, Chair, Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee		
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Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

Previous Review or Action:

Other. Specify below:

Report of the Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee to the Virginia Board of Education on the 2014 General Educational Development (GED[®]) Testing Program was approved on June 26, 2014

Action Requested:

Action will be requested at a future meeting. Specify anticipated date below:

September 18, 2014

Alignment with Board of Education Goals: Please indicate (X) all that apply:

	Goal 1: Accountability for Student Learning
x	Goal 2: Rigorous Standards to Promote College and Career Readiness
x	Goal 3: Expanded Opportunities to Learn
	Goal 4: Nurturing Young Learners
	Goal 5: Highly Qualified and Effective Educators
	Goal 6: Sound Policies for Student Success
	Goal 7: Safe and Secure Schools
	Other Priority or Initiative. Specify:

Background Information and Statutory Authority:

Goal 2: The GED[®] test is the only high school equivalency test that will fully measure college and career readiness in Virginia until 2017. The 2014 GED[®] test meets higher standards for high school completion as set by the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRS^{AE}), and standards used by Texas, Virginia, and other states. The GED[®] test provides an opportunity for adults to demonstrate college and career readiness through a new passing score designed to facilitate transitioning into a job or postsecondary education. The GED[®] test passing score is a minimum 150 for each of the four subject areas. The GED[®] with Honors score is a minimum of 170 for each of the four subject areas.

This score is reflective of performance consistent with readiness to complete credit-bearing, first-year, postsecondary courses with a grade of “C” or better, and is currently being validated through an ongoing program of longitudinal research.

Goal 3: According to the American Community Survey 2009-2011, U.S. Census Bureau, of the total state population in Virginia of 8,015,502, 10 percent of the total population, or 836,907, are adults without a high school credential. Right now in the U.S., not enough people have the required skills or knowledge to fill available jobs. The GED® test can help solve this economic need by opening the doors to college courses, apprenticeships, and job training for millions of adult learners the pathways adults need to gain skills and knowledge, gain employment, and care for their families. The 2014 GED® test ensures expanded opportunities for adult students to learn the content and skills necessary for success in the workplace and postsecondary education.

In March 2013, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Patricia I. Wright, approved the state’s adoption of the 2014 GED® test as the state approved alternative high school credential. The GED® test was selected because it is widely accepted and recognized by postsecondary education and employers.

On July 1, 2014, HB 1007 (Byron) changes all references in the *Code of Virginia* from “General Educational Development (GED®)” to “high school equivalency examinations approved by the Board of Education.”

Summary of Important Issues:

Alternative High School Equivalency Exams

Two high school equivalency assessment options are currently available in addition to the GED® test - the *High School Equivalency Test* (HiSET®), from the Educational Testing Service, and CTB/McGraw Hill’s *Test Assessing Secondary Completion™* (TASC). According to a recent report compiled by the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, 40 states have selected the 2014 GED® computer-based test as their approved alternative high school assessment, four states have selected all three high school equivalency tests, seven states have selected only the HiSET, and three states have selected only the TASC. The Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL) is researching and engaging in national conversations about these other high school equivalency options. It is important to note that all secondary credentialing alternatives to the GED® test that have been accepted in other states are still in the formative stages of implementation.

Virginia’s Investment in the 2014 GED® Test

State Race to GED funds which total \$1,945,613 per year, are used for (1) outreach to adult learners, (2) instruction to prepare for the GED® test, (3) GED® testing, and (4) computers to establish authorized Pearson VUE Testing Centers. Extensive planning and preparation for these centers has been in development since GED Testing Service® announced the new computer-based test.

The Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) grant provides funding totaling \$2,247,581 of approved ISAEP programs across the state. This amount has not changed since the program’s inception in 1999. The cost to take the complete battery of the 2014 test is \$120, for each of the four subject area tests. For ISAEP students, the costs to take the GED® and the GED Ready™ practice test are paid for with school division ISAEP program funding.

The General Adult Education (GAE) grant funds of \$1,051,800 support Virginia adult education programs. These funds are used to support adult secondary school classes for credit, GED® instructional preparation classes, civics education classes, and English as a second language (ESL) classes. For

students in these classes, the cost of the 2014 GED[®] test and GED Ready[™] test will be borne by either the individual tester or the GAE supported adult education program.

Virginia has also spent considerable time and resources in preparing teachers for the implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. Professional development for teachers is conducted by the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) and is funded by the Office of Adult Education and Literacy.

Recognition and Portability

The GED[®] credential is a well-known credential respected by employers and colleges – over 97 percent of colleges and employers accept it.

Postsecondary Education Admissions and Candidates Holding the GED[®] Credential

Today, more than ever before, GED[®] credential holders seek and enroll in postsecondary education programs. This is borne out by the results of research studies conducted by GED Testing Service[®] in 2013:

- Approximately two-thirds of GED[®] test passers report they took the GED[®] test to further their education, and 43 percent of these individuals enrolled in postsecondary education
- Two-thirds of GED[®] passers who enroll in postsecondary education do so within three years of obtaining their GED[®] credential
- Almost half (48 percent) of adults working towards obtaining their GED[®] credential report going to college as their main motivation, specifically to obtain a two-year or four-year degree (90 percent) or an advanced degree (10 percent)

Jobs

In Preparing the American Workforce to Compete in the Global Economy, the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness reported that, "There are 3.3 million job openings in the U.S. many going unfilled for months on end, as roughly half of employers now say they're having a hard time finding qualified workers to hire, especially in technical fields." The Jobs Council Web site can be viewed online at <http://www.jobs-council.com/recommendations/>. Ensuring that more adults earn a GED[®] credential to be better prepared for either the work force or postsecondary education is critical for the economic success and the individual growth of businesses throughout the state.

According to a 2009 report from the National Skills Coalition, middle-skill jobs, which require more than high school credentialing, but not a four-year degree, make up the largest part of America's and Virginia's labor market. All too often, key industries in Virginia are unable to find enough sufficiently trained workers to fill these jobs. The National Skills Coalition report can be viewed online at http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/nsc_middleskillfs_virginia.pdf.

In 2014, the GED Testing Service[®] changed the GED[®] test to ensure that test takers earning the credential are demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for success as they move on to college, job training programs, certificate programs or employment. The new GED[®] test does a better job of assessing the most applicable skills for success in college and the work force and provides additional tools and resources to help test takers navigate that path.

Computer-based Testing Options

Adult learners need to be computer literate and have the technology skills to search and apply for jobs online. The GED Testing Service[®] has a mobile option to deliver the test. Some regions in Virginia,

especially rural areas, will benefit greatly from a mobile testing solution because transportation for many adults is an issue. State and regional adult correctional facilities also need a mobile testing option. No other alternative test has this mobile option currently. We believe that Pearson VUE testing centers can provide test takers with the most advanced, highly reliable technology to consistently meet local programs’ registration and delivery needs. Further, Virginia test takers need access to secure and proctored computer-based testing to ensure the integrity of the test. Computer-based testing is the standard for many other test delivery programs. And as technology continues to advance, it is also becoming the standard format for most of the key K-12 assessment programs, including the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.

Features and Benefits of the 2014 GED® Program

The 2014 GED® test includes more support tools than other high school equivalency testing programs to help all adult students get the study support they need, both before and after the exam. The new GED® program also includes more support tools for adult educators to better assist their students in preparing for the 2014 GED® test.

Features and Benefits of the 2014 GED® program	Specific Features
Inclusive and innovative test preparation materials designed to support test taker success	MyGED™, a test taker portal that is the central location for all GED® test-related information and includes personalized study tools, an interactive user dashboard, a test center finder, on-demand score report access, and more
	Online tutorials to help students break down each step and successfully sign up and prepare for the GED® test
	GED Ready™ practice test
	Convenient scheduling 24 hours a day, seven days a week in just minutes
A proven high school equivalency exam backed by more than 70 years of experience	GEDTS has delivered the only official high school equivalency credential since 1942
	A consistent testing experience administered year-round at more than 1,800 testing centers worldwide
	Students test when and where they want
	A well-known credential respected by employers and colleges – over 97 percent of colleges and employers accept it
	A faster track to college, jobs, and better wages
Ongoing support for college and career transitions	Lifelong learning resources through the Center for Lifelong Learning at the American Council on Education (ACE). This site supports the First Stop program, which provides an extensive list of resources to help students find job training and employment around the United States.
	Through MyGED™, students can find links to information about jobs and training that they can qualify for right after

Features and Benefits of the 2014 GED® program	Specific Features
	passing the test, the college application process and how to apply for financial aid, and career pathways that lead to the salary and type of job they want.
	Through MyGED™, students can take skills assessments to learn more about what career might be right for them.
	Smart Transcript provides links to detailed information about the content tested and test taker scores. GED® test takers who take the 2014 test will receive a secure digital copy of their transcript. Digital copies of transcripts can be e-mailed directly to employers.

The 2014 GED® Test Benefits Virginia Test Takers

The new GED® testing program is designed to save Virginia test takers time, and offers the ability to spread test taking costs over time. The specific savings for the test taker include the following:

Benefit to test takers	Feature
Time to test	With online registration and scheduling, a student can move forward any day, any time, and not wait for the center to be open the next morning.
Time to jobs and college	With same-day scores, students know how they did and can apply for their desired jobs or training programs on the same day that they test.
Money	The ability to register for one test at a time means that students can budget the cost of the test and preparation in pieces and build a realistic plan of success, rather than worrying about paying for everything up front.
Anxiety	Studies have shown that the individualized system available through computer-based testing has led to a more enjoyable experience for the student. Students are applauding the “test at your own pace” model, in which students start the test when they’re ready and move at their own pace, as opposed to the paper-based testing (PBT) model, in which the whole classroom must have the same start and finish time.
Days off work	When students can register, schedule, and test on days and at times that work for them, they can make the testing process work around their schedules and not miss days at work that are crucial to their family budgets.
Daycare costs	Many test takers are single parents with little or no family nearby to help care for children. With online preparation tools like <i>GED Ready™</i> , available through the <i>MyGED™</i> portal, students can prepare for the 2014 GED® test at home, in full

Benefit to test takers	Feature
	sight of their children.
Accommodations:	Administration services provided by GEDTS

When these cost savings are factored in, especially the ability to schedule the tests, pass the tests, and gain a credential that can lead to a job all within a week’s time, GED® test takers are financially ahead with the GED® test.

GED Ready™, The Official Practice Test

Adults in Virginia without a high school diploma need access to practice tests that identify where they need to strengthen their skills. In the fall of 2013, GED Testing Service® launched GED Ready™: The Official Practice Test. This assessment is a computer-based practice test approximately one half the length of the operational 2014 GED® test. Like the operational test, GED Ready™ is aligned to the CCRS and is standardized and placed on the same scale as the operational test. These attributes allow GED Ready™ to provide information to test takers on their likelihood of passing the 2014 GED® test as well as descriptive information about their skills, as demonstrated on the assessment, and what they will need to master in order to move to the next level of performance on the test.

Already in 2014 GED Testing Service® has delivered over 35,000 GED Ready™ tests and the correlation between performing well on the GED Ready™ and passing the operational GED® test is incredibly strong. Ninety-five percent of students who perform in the green “Ready to Test” zone on the GED Ready™ go on to pass the corresponding module of the GED® test. The predictive nature of the GED Ready™ is a powerful tool that is available to all students. It gives students who pass confidence that they are ready to commit to the operational GED® test, and for those who do not score in the green zone, it provides a detailed, actionable, prescriptive study plan for remediation.

The GED Ready™ is administered over the Internet via a secure connection and provides immediate, individualized score reports to test takers, along with information that will allow adult educators to score the constructed response items and provide feedback to test takers. The test has launched with two forms initially, but additional forms will be added as appropriate. In correctional settings, the GED Ready™ is available as an offline version, delivered in the same way the operational GED® test is delivered.

The GED Ready™ is available for purchase by test takers through the MyGED™ portal. Virginia adult education and literacy programs are also able to purchase the GED Ready™ for distribution to their students. The GED Testing Service® is working with over 15 publishers that are reselling the *GED Ready™* to their customers. Allowing these publishers to distribute the *GED Ready™* test, provides greater flexibility for Virginia adult education programs to purchase *GED Ready™* through existing publishers from which they already buy other test preparation materials. Adult education centers, work force development centers, libraries, and other community organizations can buy the *GED Ready™* from one of the many publishers.

Educator Training

Well in advance of the release of the 2014 GED® test, Virginia had made a commitment to making certain that adult education teachers had access to training and training materials in a variety of formats. The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) at Virginia Commonwealth University, OAEL’s professional development arm, has spent considerable time and resources in providing professional development activities for teachers in preparation for the 2014 GED® test. The 2013 and

2014 Virginia Institute for Lifelong Learning (VAILL) summer conferences held at Radford University offer GED[®] content specific training in algebraic problem solving, quantitative problem solving, geometry, science and social studies through project-based learning, and reasoning through language arts. In addition, professional development opportunities for teachers to learn how to teach the new technology-enhanced items on the GED[®] test is also provided through regional adult education training. Professional development for the implementation and delivery of alternative tests other than the GED[®] would take a considerable amount of time and resources to develop.

Transition from the OAEL GED[®] Services Unit Credentialing to GED Credentialing[™]

Test takers need a place to go to get their credentials if they have a job interview or need immediate access to transcripts or certificates as proof they have been credentialed. As part of the 2014 GED[®] Program, the GED Testing Service[®] offered states the option of providing a Web-based credentialing service called GED Credentialing[™]. The OAEL transitioned to the GED Credentialing[™] service on January 2, 2014. GED[®] test takers who need a copy of their GED[®] transcript or GED[®] certificate can create an account and order either an electronic or paper copy of their credentials. To date in Virginia, 22,631 e-transcripts, 1,238 e-certificates, 931 paper transcripts, and 923 official paper copies of the GED[®] certificate have been processed by the GED Credentialing[™] service.

Virginia GED[®] Testers to Date

Between January 1 and July 7, 2014, 1,874 Virginia testers have taken one or more of the 2014 GED[®] subject area tests. Of these individuals, 1,063 have completed the entire battery of tests and 578 have passed the complete battery of the GED[®] test. The Virginia pass average is 54 percent while the national pass average is 48 percent.

Between January 1 and June 1, 2013, the last year of the 2002 test series, 9,728 individuals in Virginia took the entire GED[®] test, of which, 6,988 passed the complete battery, reflecting a pass rate of 71 percent. Comparison of this year's data to last year's data shows that present GED[®] test completers are 9 percent of the number completed last year and that present GED[®] passers are 7 percent of the number passing last year.

The impact of these reduced numbers and expanded cost is being closely examined by the OAEL in the first year of the 2014 GED[®] test.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

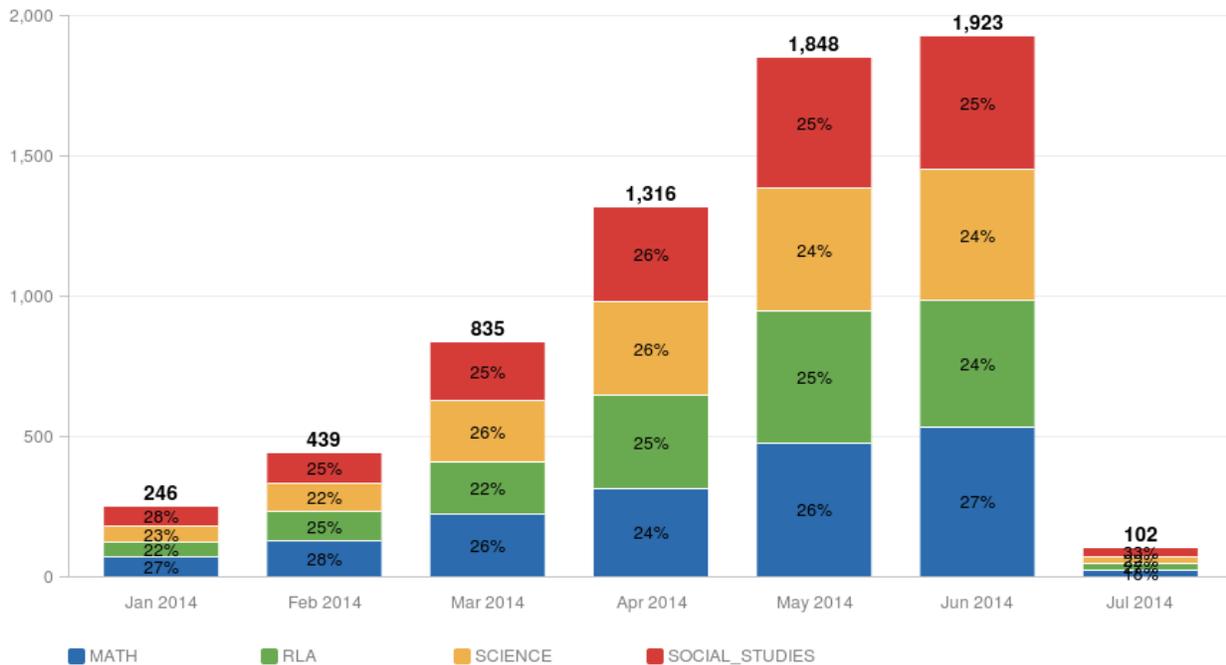
The cost for the GED Ready[™] practice test is \$24 for all four subject area tests, or \$6 per individual subject area test. The cost to take the full battery of the GED[®] test is \$120, or \$30 per subject. Testing centers receive compensation of \$5 per test hour for each student they test. This cost also includes scoring, reporting, and mailing or e-mailing of original transcripts and certificates. Test takers can take the entire battery of tests, or, they may elect to take one subject area at a time on a pay as you go basis. Many OAEL funded adult education and literacy programs will be using 2014-2015 Race to GED[®] funds to purchase vouchers to help offset the cost to adults when they take the practice test and/or the official GED[®] test. Some regional adult education programs are using state Race to GED[®] funds to pay for the full or partial cost of the test if test takers meet certain program incentive requirements.

Additionally, the selection of alternatives to the GED[®] would impact the Department of Education's staff resources. In addition to performing adult secondary education and ISAEP duties, the OAEL specialist for adult secondary and ISAEP is also the acting GED administrator. Without a dedicated, full-time, high school equivalency administrator, it would be extremely difficult to adopt additional tests that require the same level of oversight, management, and technical assistance to the field as the GED[®]

test. State adult education and literacy programs also lack the staff resources and funding to administer alternative tests.

As previously stated, the cost of the GED® test has increased from \$58 to \$120 for the full battery. Although the new cost of the test has been a concern on how it would impact test taker behavior, data from January 1, 2014 to June 30, 2014, suggest upward trends in the number of tests taken by content area and month, and the number of those who pass all four subject areas.

GED® Tests Taken by Content Area and Month



Month	Number of Test Takers That Passed All Four Subject Area Tests of the 2014 GED® Test
January 2014	16
February 2014	28
March 2014	78
April 2014	102
May 2014	151
June 2014	185
July 7, 2014	18

GED Analytics™

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

Final review for the request for approval of the 2014 General Educational Development (GED®) Testing Program is expected at the September 18, 2014, Board of Education meeting.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education receive the request for first review.