



April 17, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

A lot has happened lately and we want to set the record straight and support you as you get questions from your leadership and other stakeholders about the future of the GED® test.

We realize and appreciate that most jurisdictions understand and are supportive of the direction we are taking the GED® test and are moving forward with us to better serve adult learners. Change of this magnitude is difficult, but absolutely necessary. In order to achieve true results, adult learners need us all to be more courageous because that is what it will take to ensure they are prepared for the future.

By now I am sure that each of you have seen the article, "*Some states dropping GED as test price spikes*". The premise of this article is that many states are abandoning the GED® test in favor of an alternative. Let me be the first to say that nothing could be further from the truth.

The truth is that the **majority of jurisdictions** are testing on computer and are working to increase CBT capacity so that they are prepared to deliver the 2014 GED® test. But more than just preparing for 2014, we now have evidence that shows that our test-takers are excelling on computer:

- Passing at higher rates
- Finishing in less time,
- More likely to retake a failed test.

If we are focused on what's best for the adult learner, then we should all be working to replicate results like these.

The truth is that only six states have officially issued formal requests for proposals and more than 20 states have indicated publicly that they intend to use the GED® test in 2014 and beyond. The three states—New York, Montana, and New Hampshire—who selected another test issued RFPs that demanded paper-based testing and did not require alignment with career- and college-readiness standards in 2014. We believe these states will be the exception rather than the norm despite what some articles and policymakers would have you believe. We will continue to compete and do everything possible to ensure that the GED® test remains the exam of choice for all jurisdictions that believe as we do that adult learners deserve more than we are giving them today. All of us have long acknowledged that we must raise the bar for adult learners. We believe adults are capable of acquiring the skills necessary to compete, including demonstrating basic technology skills and college and career readiness in 2014 and beyond.

The truth is that you don't have to look far to find evidence that the GED® test must change to remain relevant and effective for adult learners to earn a living wage. Noticeably absent from the conversation are the voices of employers and community and technical colleges, voices that are calling for change and higher level skills. Attached to this note are samples of articles and research that support the need for change now, not three or ten years from now.

The truth is that the GED® test will be the only assessment testing against college and career readiness standards period. The test will contain the types of items truly capable of measuring depth of knowledge and the skills that employers and colleges now expect. Choosing an alternative assessment that does not provide adults an opportunity to demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills will just leave your adult learners behind.

The truth is that all this talk about 'costs' and the potential of lower test-taker fees from ETS or McGraw Hill is fuzzy math that is not indicative of the full costs of test delivery and administration to states, testing centers and test-takers. The GED Testing Service fee of \$120 cannot be compared to the cost proposed by ETS or McGraw-Hill because neither option's announced price includes payments to run testing centers. A fairer comparison would be to deduct test center compensation making the cost of the GED® test \$80, roughly comparable to the \$50-\$70 being promised by ETS and McGraw-Hill for paper-based testing. You will have to read between the lines carefully to find the buried costs hidden in the alternative assessments.

The GED Testing Service has been fully transparent for more than two years about costs, services and benefits to test-takers that will be provided through 2015. The \$120 battery price is fully inclusive of every service and accommodation necessary to run the GED® testing program—including test center compensation. We encourage you to have conversations in your jurisdiction about the true costs and scope of services being promised by would-be providers. You should consider the following questions:

- What is the cost to the test-takers that choose to schedule and take one subject test at a time instead of scheduling or taking all five subject tests at one time?
- Is multiple choice and essay scoring included in the quoted costs and what is the turnaround time for all scores?
- What are the costs of providing test-takers with transcripts and credentials?
- How will you subsidize the costs of test delivery, including costs of staff (proctors), facilities and test accommodations or ensure there are enough test centers willing to incur these costs?
- What is the cost to correct each error on a paper form—will it be \$15 for certain errors as is currently experienced by at least one state?
- Who will actually pay for a test that is fully aligned with college and career readiness standards in three to seven years—will states be asked to shoulder the costs of development like in New York?
- What are the costs to test-takers who relocate or apply to colleges or training programs that are not familiar with or unwilling to accept ETS or McGraw Hill test scores?
- What are other real costs to your state of not preparing adults for the jobs and training programs available in your state?

The conversation and assertions in recent media articles do not tell the entire story. The choice that some states are making has real consequences for adult learners and for those jurisdictions' economic development.

We hope that you pass along this information to other colleagues, including policymakers. It's important that we have substantive conversations about all the issues and changes that we need to make, instead of settling for a cheaper, less effective test. It's past time that the media and policymakers acknowledge the role that your staff and adult educators play in economic development in your jurisdiction and that you need resources to do the job right. And if you have questions, please contact us. We have a multitude of resources on our website and more than a dozen representatives out in the field. We are here, we are happy to talk, and we are committed to helping you help adult learners.

Thank you for your attention and your support.



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## ***Reports and Fact Sheets Supporting the Need for the 2014 GED<sup>®</sup> Test***

*Career Clusters: Forecasting Demand for Jobs 2008-2018, Georgetown Center on Education & the Workforce:* <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/clusters-execsum.pdf>

*America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs, Skills 2 Compete:*  
<http://www.urban.org/publications/411633.html>

*State Fact Sheets About Middle-Skill Jobs, National Skills Coalition:*  
<http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/fact-sheets/state-fact-sheets/>

*Can California Compete? Reducing the Skills Gap...* (also includes other state-specific reports on the skills gap), Americas Edge: <http://www.americasedge.org/research/americas-edge-research/>

*Bridging the Skills Gap: Help Wanted, Skills Lacking, ASTD:*  
[http://nist.gov/mep/upload/Bridging-the-Skills-Gap\\_2012.pdf](http://nist.gov/mep/upload/Bridging-the-Skills-Gap_2012.pdf)

*GED<sup>®</sup> Credential to College: Patterns and Participation in Postsecondary Education Programs, ACE/GED Testing Service Report:*  
<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/research-and-policy>

*ACT Research Points to Continued Gap Between High School Preparation, College Expectations, ACT:*  
[http://www.act.org/newsroom/releases/view.php?lang=english&p=2803&hq\\_e=ei&hq\\_m=2435975&hq\\_l=1&hq\\_v=c8fb8031b2](http://www.act.org/newsroom/releases/view.php?lang=english&p=2803&hq_e=ei&hq_m=2435975&hq_l=1&hq_v=c8fb8031b2)



Listening. Learning. Leading.®

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Dear Colleagues:

The GED Testing Service® has recently made public several inaccurate claims about Educational Testing Service's new high school equivalency test called *HiSET*™. I believe that it's important for you to have accurate information about our *HiSET* assessment and changes to the GED® landscape when answering questions from your stakeholders.

After listening to the needs of states, educators, policymakers and employers, ETS designed the *HiSET* program to include elements that are critical to providing out-of-school youth and adults with the best opportunity to demonstrate their high school-level proficiency, and their readiness for higher education or the workplace. The program provides an *accessible* and *affordable* alternative to the GED test for states, educators, test takers and test center administrators.

The facts are that while some states are moving forward with the GED test, states within the GED Options Workgroup are collectively seeking options to the GED test so that their adult education students have alternatives. The workgroup, which started with six states, has grown to **41** states. Currently, there are at least 13 states in the process of releasing RFPs or RFIs between now and March 2014.

The facts are that states are increasing capacity around computer-based testing (CBT) and **ETS is offering paper-based testing along with CBT as requested by states**. ETS agrees that moving to CBT is an appropriate step for adult education, but also understands that the adult education environment needs more time to transition platforms. The GED Testing Service approach does not allow this. For example, New York, Montana and New Hampshire — which have chosen GED alternatives — requested in their RFPs a longer transition to CBT. ETS has agreed to assist states with this transition and will continue offering paper-based testing for adult education in order to maintain accessibility for test takers who do not have access to test via computer.

The facts are that **the *HiSET* program measures career- and college-readiness standards** providing test takers with a career- and college-readiness score in each of the five content areas tested:

- Language Arts–Reading
- Language Arts–Writing
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies

This information will provide test takers, colleges, preparation providers and employers with information that can be used to help determine college and career readiness.



The facts are that ETS never claimed that our price of \$50 included funding to run testing centers. Unlike the GED Testing Program, the *HiSET* program operates within states' existing infrastructure of adult education testing centers. The *HiSET* test's \$50 fee is for CBT or paper-based testing, test materials (including shipping), accommodations, scoring and reporting. Moreover, **unlike the GED Testing Program, ETS will not charge test centers licensing fees to administer the *HiSET* assessment.** Test center administration fees are set by the state or testing centers, not ETS. Nor will ETS ask states and testing centers to become "ETS" testing centers as required by Pearson® VUE for the 2014 GED.

The facts are that ETS's *HiSET* test center model allows states or testing centers to determine the appropriate fee to charge so that they can cover their operating expenses. For example, the \$38–\$40 reimbursement that Pearson VUE is "giving back" to testing centers could be added to the \$50 *HiSET* fee and test takers' out-of-pocket expense would still be less than the GED at \$90. In addition, the *HiSET* program allows test takers who do not pass on the first attempt to sit for **two additional test administrations at no additional charge** within a calendar year. ETS established this policy to try to alleviate financial barriers that may prevent adult learners from earning a high school equivalency diploma and moving forward in higher education, careers and life.

The facts are that *HiSET* test takers purchasing the full battery (all five content areas) will be charged \$50 and may choose to schedule all five sections at once or on separate days. **The fee remains \$50** and is not dependant on how test takers schedule their administrations. States also have the option to combine pre-2014 GED scores with *HiSET* scores to issue a state high school equivalency diploma or certificate. If a pre-2014 GED test taker has not completed one or more of the content areas in the GED test, after January 1, 2014, in participating states, a test taker could pay \$15 to take a single *HiSET* subtest.

Finally, ETS agrees that the assertions made in recent media articles and by other vendors do not tell the entire story, and that the decisions made around high school equivalency testing do have real consequences for adult learners.

When seeking accurate information about the *HiSET* program and high school equivalency testing in order to make an informed choice, I urge you to contact me directly.

Your candidates deserve the best chance to succeed, and ETS is committed to providing states with the most accessible, affordable and inclusive high school equivalency program available.

Sincerely,

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ETS *HiSET*™ Program