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Leadership Matters

I'm sure you have noticed that changes to the GED® test, which the KYAE system has been tracking over the past few years, have finally come to the attention of the general public. Practically every week, we see news stories about the upcoming changes in local, state and national news media.

As superintendents, college presidents and other community leaders raise questions about how GED® changes will affect Kentuckians, you are in a unique position to proactively be our voice and messenger on these issues by explaining why the test is changing, how the test is changing and why the cost is increasing.

In addition, you are in a perfect position to help mitigate the increased cost for students by leading local efforts to cover the costs, or at least subsidize the costs, for students who cannot afford the increased test fee. Becoming a vocal advocate for your students will not only help raise funds for test fees but will also help raise awareness of adult education in your community.

Please let me take this opportunity to publicly commend Dr. Jacqueline Korengel, Kentucky GED® Administrator and Director, Strategic Initiatives, and Rae Smith, Associate, Strategic Initiatives, GED® Services, for their unwavering diligence to ensure that Kentucky has a seamless transition plan to move our Commonwealth to the new test on January 2, 2014. They have been working on this plan for at least two years, resulting in Kentucky being one of the better prepared states to ensure the continuation of high school equivalency credentialing. I would also like to thank them for their efforts in keeping adult educators across the Commonwealth updated with any and all information provided to us by the GED Testing Service™.

Finally, I want to share with you the following letter (starting on page 2) from CPE President Robert L. King to all members of the Kentucky General Assembly to explain upcoming GED® test changes and how Kentucky is addressing high school equivalency credentialing. The letter contains information that may be useful in your role as the local KYAE ambassador.

Sincerely,

Recie D. Stagnolia, Vice President
Kentucky Adult Education





Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

TO: Members, Kentucky General Assembly

FROM: Robert L. King, President
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

DATE: June 13, 2013

RE: Release of a new GED® assessment in 2014

As the nation moves toward the release of a new GED® assessment in 2014, I want to take this opportunity to provide some background about the test and explain how Kentucky is moving forward to continue the provision of a high school equivalency diploma for adults.

Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE), a unit of the Council on Postsecondary Education, is responsible for the administration and management of GED® testing. The GED® assessment has been available since the 1940s, when it was developed to provide an avenue by which returning veterans could earn their high school diplomas and obtain a job. Based on research over the past 70 years, the steward of the assessment, GED Testing Service™ (GEDTS™), has periodically introduced new editions of the assessment in alignment with expectations of high school graduating seniors and economic forecasts.

The current GED® 2002 series assessment is delivered via paper and pencil and expires December 18, 2013. The newest edition will be released January 2, 2014, as a computer-based test. It is described as “raising the bar” by reflecting 21st Century skills and aligning with college- and career-readiness standards. The new assessment will be locally delivered, but taken solely via computer-based-testing (not online), with paper-based testing exceptions (e.g. disabilities accommodations). Consequently, adult students will be required to possess similar, critical technological skills to the secondary school system students. Until then, Kentucky continues to offer paper-based GED® 2002 testing at 41 testing centers throughout the Commonwealth.

Developing a new GED® test is a very expensive proposition. GEDTS estimates a cost of \$26 million. The GEDTS parent company joined Pearson VUE to form a new, hybrid GEDTS organization. With this joint venture, they could afford to develop a new edition of the GED® test that better reflects college- and career-readiness rigor (something for which business, industry, and educators have been clamoring) and a network of computer-based assessment centers from which to offer the assessment that will lend to greater, convenient access without having to build a new testing infrastructure.

Historically, the GED® assessment has been the most widely used, nationally-recognized, and portable high school equivalency assessment in the United States. It is also widely used internationally. Although other vendors have recently entered the high school equivalency assessment public marketplace, it is important to verify the comparability of their assessments.

The preponderance of information indicates that while proposed assessments may ultimately provide comparable alternatives to the new edition of the GED® assessment, the GED® 2014 assessment remains the forerunner in offering a responsive, nationally-recognized, and portable assessment.

KYAE currently sets the \$60 fee for paper-based GED® testing, but due to its new configuration as a private company, GEDTS will determine the fee for computer-based GED® testing. While the current \$60 is intended to cover testing center costs, primarily examiner wages (administration of the test), testing materials, and scoring, many testing centers must supplement the \$60 fee with their own resources – thus, they are not breaking even as intended. Consequently, some testing centers have considered closing their doors, thereby limiting access to students. Therefore, \$60 no longer reflects the true cost of paper-based testing. The national average for the current paper-based GED® testing fee is \$75 (the highest state test fee is \$400). The computer-based GED® test includes administration costs for which the testing center is reimbursed. In other words, of the new \$120 fee, \$80 pays for the cost of the test and \$40 supports the local testing center. To administer the entire test consumes about

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eight hours. The new fee is also comparable (or less than) other assessments through which our target population earns credentials. For example:

Test	Number of Hours	Cost
Computer-based GED®	8 hours	\$120
Pharmacy Technician	2 hours	\$129
Massage Therapist (NCETMB)	2 hours and 40 mins.	\$185
Computer Service Technician (CompTIA A+) (Two exams to certify)	1.5 hours each	\$183/each

We have historically required students to take the entire assessment battery, usually over a two-day period. The computer-based assessment permits students to more easily schedule, prepare, and pay for each of the four content areas one at a time (\$30), rather than pay \$120 at once for the entire assessment battery. Taking one content area at a time may actually be an encouragement for students to succeed at a higher rate rather than being overwhelmed by having to prepare and take the entire eight-hour battery in one or two sittings. Therefore, the computer-based format may be more convenient and financially easier to navigate instead of paying one lump sum. Additionally, many adult education programs work with local business and industry and other community organizations to provide “scholarships” and other opportunities to pay the GED® testing fee if the test-taking student is unable to do so. On the positive side, we do know that data research suggests GED® graduates earn \$9,700 more annually than those without a high school diploma. In other words, a \$120 investment has a pretty good rate of return when factored over a 30-year work career (\$291,000).

KYAE has every intention of remaining receptive to other comparable assessments introduced into the market. However, at this time the GED® remains a highly reputable, nationally-recognized, and portable high school equivalency assessment for which KYAE continues to prepare for its arrival.

If you have any questions, please contact Reecie Stagnolia, Vice President, Kentucky Adult Education, Council on Postsecondary Education, at (502) 573-5114, ext. 115.

2013-14 funding amounts, policy change

The KYAE Online Finance Module has been loaded with 2013-14 funding amounts for core services, federal supplement and professional development (PD). The deadline for completing program budgets in the Online Finance Module is **July 8, 2013**. Programs will receive contracts within the next couple of weeks.

As announced earlier this year, the allowable use of PD funds for 2013-14 has been revised. Please follow these guidelines in entering the PD portion of your budget.

- Programs may budget up to the allocated PD amount on the PD line. Do not budget more for PD than your county’s allocated amount.

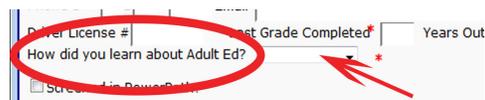
- Programs must ensure that adequate PD funds are reserved to support the KYAE PD model for all staff members who must meet PD requirements.
- Any PD funds in excess of what is reserved to cover the KYAE PD model may be budgeted in core services.
- Any excess PD funds budgeted in core services may be used to cover salaries for staff attending PD.

In addition, the federal supplement amount is a line in the Online Finance Module. This amount should not be changed.

If you have questions about the budget or entering information online, please contact Ashley.Smith@ky.gov or (502) 573-1555 x250.

Tracking outreach

As KYAE spends resources on outreach, it’s critical that we track how students are hearing about adult education so we can effectively direct resources in future campaigns. Please ask your students how they heard about adult education and enter the answer on the Student General Information screen in AERIN. The field is “How did you learn about adult education?” The drop-down offers several choices.



This information will help inform the planning of future outreach campaigns.

Bright Ideas • Student Outreach



As free GED® testing continues, providers are using KYAE-provided outreach materials in creative ways. JoEllen Mitchell, director, Pendleton County Adult Education, reports that her local newspaper, The Falmouth Outlook, is printing the “Free GED® Testing” fliers as ads ... free of charge!

Many programs are using Facebook as an effective, no-cost way to communicate with prospective and current students. Check out KYAE’s Facebook page to see motivational stories submitted by GED® graduates. Let your GED® graduates know that by sharing their story on [KYAE’s Facebook](#) page, they can be entered into a drawing for an iPad! The deadline is June 28, 2013.

While on KYAE’s Facebook page, don’t miss the great GED® graduation photos from across the Commonwealth!

For more outreach best practices, [click here](#).

KYAE plans Fall 2013 regional meetings

KYAE is planning Fall 2013 regional meetings for program directors. The meetings will address topics such as the latest information on upcoming GED® changes, program data, TABE online, state and local student outreach efforts, performance and accountability and other relevant subjects. *Please watch for dates and locations to be shared soon.*

Faces of KYAE

GED®
graduate
uses
experiences
to help others



The following is one in an ongoing series of student success stories. To see your student successes highlighted in News to Use, contact Missy.Brownson@ky.gov.

Donna Whitworth grew up in a poor area where standing in the welfare line and dropping out of school were the norm. “Everyone that came from the area did the same thing – which was pretty much nothing,” Donna said.

She and members of her family were no different; finishing high school was not a priority. Donna scraped by with dead-end jobs until she got pregnant with her son. “I wanted a better future for him,” said Donna. “For me to give him a better future, I had to have one myself.”

To provide for her son, Donna began receiving public assistance. As a term of receiving assistance, she was required to participate in activities to improve her skills

and opportunities. It was through these activities that she was encouraged to attend the Newport Adult Learning Center in Newport, KY.

“When I first came (to the adult education center), I was really nervous ... You know, I’m thinking all these people are going to know how stupid I am,” Donna said. However, she found the adult education staff to be very welcoming and supportive. “They said, ‘You have what it takes to be whatever you want to be,’ and I realized the only thing that held me back was me.”

Donna proclaims that the day she earned her GED® was “the best day of my life” – as well as a new beginning. She went on to pass the Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment, which enabled her to become the administrative assistant at the Newport Adult Learning Center.

Donna is now the first person whom adult education students come in contact with at the center. “I let them know I started here, too, and if I can do it, I know that you can do it,” she said. “I tell them they have what it takes, that they did what they needed to do by coming in the door.” Donna is proud of the fact that she has broken the cycles of undereducation and poverty. “My son knows that school is the most important thing, because you cannot be anything without it,” she said. “We are stable. I pay the bills. I’m able to do all that because I got myself a GED®.”

Parting Thought • Something to challenge or inspire

“Start by doing what’s necessary, then what’s possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”



– St. Francis of Assisi, 1181 – 1226