

State Board of Education – Committee on Instruction
April 16, 2015

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Between In the years 2010 and 2013, an average of 79,600 adults per year obtained the high school equivalency certificate in Texas. That's almost 80,000 families that were positively impacted because their mother, father, sister, brother, grandmother or grandfather received the credential that allowed them to get a better job, to keep the job they had, or enroll in community college to move toward a better life for themselves and their family.

However, when representatives of Pearson GED® came to Texas in January, they reported that only 6,000 Texans passed the new GED® in 2014, a decline of well over 90% compared to the prior four years' average.

Record of High School Equivalency Exam Achievement in Texas ¹					
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Completers ²	47,375	44,468	44,369	50,826	
Passers ³	33,411	31,021	29,938	37,338	
Total	80,786	75,489	74,307	88,164	6,000 ⁴

¹Based on the Annual Statistical Report of the GED®Test 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 www.gedtestingservice.com

²Completers are individuals who started the test in a prior year and completed it in the year noted.

³Passers are individuals who started and passed the entire test in the year noted.

⁴Based on PowerPoint presented by GED® Testing Service at GED® Roadshow, Fort Worth, TX, Jan. 28, 2015

These numbers are just words on a page, unless you really stop to think about the *people behind the numbers*, the real people who attend classes every week and work so hard to obtain the credential that will change their lives and the lives of their children and grandchildren forever.

I interact with these people every week. They call my office to get help to find a class near their home or work. They enroll in our Project BEST program where we teach the subjects they need to prepare for the high school equivalency exam. Most come to us after years of struggling to make ends meet, working at low paying jobs and finding doors closed to them.

These adult students *want* to learn. They are hard-working and willing to put forth the effort to gain the credential they need to take the next step. In the past, most of these students achieved their goal. But since January 2014, not a *single student* in our program has been able to do that. The doors of opportunity have been closed to them.

This new exam not only requires that they master the content areas of math, science, social studies and language arts at a *much* more rigorous level than the previous test and at a much higher financial cost. It also requires that they be able to type 25 words per minute. This one component alone is a tremendous stumbling block for a large percentage of our students. Many come to us having never before spent any

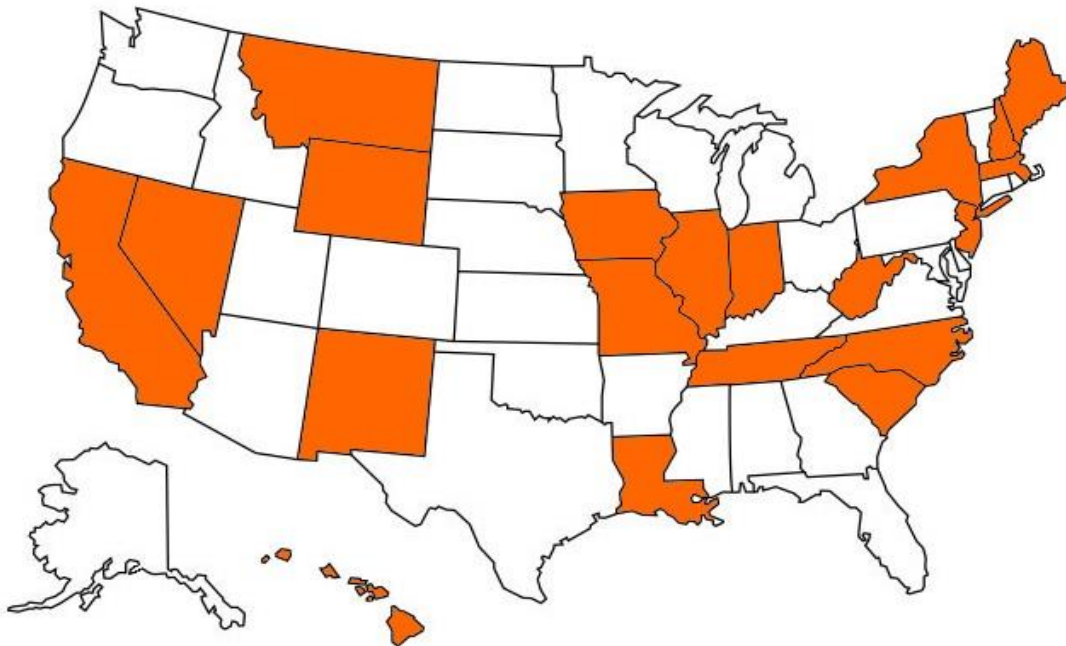
real time in front of a computer. They don't have a computer at home and if they do, they don't have consistent Internet access to utilize free or low cost programs to help them study.

The vast majority of our students initially assess at about 8th grade level for language arts and 4-6th grade for math. They have a steep hill to climb to learn all they need to master the requirements of the current GED® exam. Factoring polynomials and graphing the slope of a line are skills that most adults with college degrees can't do easily. I dare say that writing an essay comparing the preamble of the US Constitution with FDR's first inaugural address is a challenge that would not come easy to anyone in this room. Yet that is what we are asking of our adult students on the new GED® exam. And we waited 15 months just to learn what the expected word count was on that very item. Too little, too late for the thousands of students who attempted the exam in all of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015.

Our students deserve better. Their children deserve better. And we can do better. If you have not have the opportunity to carefully review the current test, and the two alternative tests, I ask you to please take the time do so before you award another contract to the current provider.

Consider that at the present time, we have NO option for a paper/pencil version for students who struggle with a computer based test. Consider that the two alternatives would cost our students *less than half* the cost of the current test. And consider the more than 70,000 students, and their children and grandchildren, who did NOT receive a high school equivalency credential in 2014, and who will not receive it again in 2015.

Twenty states have already made a change. It is time for Texas to follow suit.



Twenty states (indicated in orange) have already adopted an alternative to or an addition to the new GED® exam for their adult education students.