



**TO:** Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Committee

**FROM:** Kevin G. Smith 

**SUBJECT:** Proposed amendment of section 100.7 of the Regulations of the Commissioner, relating to the transition to a new High School Equivalency Test

**DATE:** September 13, 2013

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** 

**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Discussion**

Should the Board of Regents adopt the proposed amendment of section 100.7 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education to permit, for a limited time, acceptance of partial passing scores on one or more sub-tests of the current GED® examination for the corresponding sub-test on a new State High School Equivalency examination (the Test Assessing Secondary Completion – TASC)?

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

Review of policy.

**Proposed Handling**

This item will come before the Board of Regents Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Committee for discussion at its September 2013 meeting. A copy of the proposed amendment is attached. Supporting materials are available upon request from the Secretary to the Board of Regents.

**Procedural History**

In October 2011, the ACCES Committee was informed of developments to the GED® examination which raised concerns regarding the State's reliance on that exam as the primary pathway to a New York State High School Equivalency (HSE) Diploma. In February 2012, the Committee discussed alternative pathways to a HSE Diploma.

An update was provided at a joint meeting of the P-12 Education Committee and the ACCES Committee at the April 2012 meeting. At the September 2012 ACCES Committee meeting, the Board of Regents agreed to issue an RFP for a new HSE examination, provide multiple assessments to a HSE diploma, and transition the Adult Education system to Common Core and Career/College readiness. Updates were provided at the November 2012, February 2013 and June 2013 ACCES Committee meetings.

### **Background Information**

Currently, the GED<sup>®</sup> examination is the primary method to achieve a New York State High School Equivalency Diploma. However, with the changes in the administration and content of the GED<sup>®</sup> examination beginning in January 2014, as well as the increased cost of the exam that was announced by GEDTS (the company that owns and administers the GED<sup>®</sup> examination), the Board of Regents decided at the September 2012 meeting that the State should issue a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) in order to meet state procurement standards and identify an appropriately rigorous assessment for a High School Equivalency (HSE) Diploma at the most reasonable price.

The RFP required that the exam be aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) over the next three years (2014-2016). A panel of three psychometricians and three experts in higher education and adult education scored the RFPs. On March 7, 2013, Commissioner King announced that the winning bidder was CTB/McGraw Hill with a new examination called Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC). The cost of the test will be \$52 per test administered in 2014, \$54 in 2015, and \$56 in 2016.

### **A New HSE Examination (TASC)**

TASC will be similar to the current GED<sup>®</sup> examination. The exam will be composed of the same five subtest sections that comprise the current GED<sup>®</sup> test: English Language Arts -Reading, English Language Arts - Writing, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. In 2014, the exam will use multiple choice items in Reading, Science, and Social Studies, complemented by gridded response items in Math, and an essay in Writing. Constructed-response and technology enhanced items will be added in 2015 and 2016. TASC will be available in English and Spanish. Braille, large print and audio versions for the visually impaired will also be available.

TASC will gradually transition from a paper-based exam to a computer-based exam. In the first year (2014), the vendor will provide up to 20% of the exams on computer. In the second year (2015) the vendor will provide up to 40% of exams on computer, and in the third year (2016), the vendor will provide up to 60% of the exams on computer. The actual number of exams available on computer will be solely determined by SED based upon surveys, a comprehensive readiness assessment, and the capability of the test centers to provide Computer Based test administrations. Test centers may offer only paper-based exams, only computer-based exams, or offer both.

The examination will be **aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** over a three year period (2014-2016), which will support a natural, gradual, and fair transition to CCSS. In 2015 and 2016, CTB will introduce more rigorous item types (e.g. constructed-responses). This allows for a transition from less rigorous CCSS aligned assessment in 2014 to more rigorous and deeply aligned CCSS assessment in 2015 and 2016. Transitioning to full CCSS alignment will also be accomplished by gradually increasing the rigor of the content each year.

## **Development of TASC**

SED staff continues to meet with CTB/McGraw Hill on the development of the examination. Meetings have focused on exam development and design, accommodations, business practices, error corrections, communications, answer sheets, etc. Sample TASC questions have been posted on the CTB website.

SED's recent hiring of a project manager and two content specialists (one for Math and Science and one for English and Social Studies) and the participation of the Office of Assessment in the meetings with CTB/McGraw Hill has been helpful in ensuring that the new exam will meet SED standards and will be properly aligned to Common Core.

An advisory group of representatives from the two major adult education associations in New York: the New York Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCAL), and the New York State Association for Continuing/Community Education (NYACCE) has been formed and has met to provide input and suggestions from the field in regard to implementing the new exam. The workgroup is focusing on three areas: the structure and content of the test, the testing process, and communication to the public.

An initial round of field testing of TASC in the spring and summer has been completed and has resulted in some adjustments to the exam questions. A final round of field testing which will occur in October will set a national passing score by norming the exam with high school seniors; align the paper- and computer-based exams; and finalize exam questions for 2014 and 2015.

On August 28, Indiana announced their intention to initiate a contract with CTB/McGraw Hill to use the TASC as their High School Equivalency exam to replace the GED<sup>®</sup> examination.

## **Accepting passing GED<sup>®</sup> sub-test scores for new HSE Diploma tests**

The Board of Regents has been in the forefront of supporting the historic transition from the full reliance on the GED<sup>®</sup> examination to the creation of a competitive market of assessment products and options to inform bestowal of the New York State High School Equivalency diploma. SED's strategy has been to maintain full cost subsidy, to introduce computer-based testing and to phase-in Common Core rigor as test takers have the opportunity to learn and demonstrate these new skills.

The effort to communicate with and accommodate retesting of those individuals known to have taken the 2002 edition\* of the GED® exam (administered in calendar years 2002 through 2013) has been successful. The anticipated surge in test takers has been significant and expected to continue through the end of 2013. SED has worked closely with all involved to assure that test takers are aware of the changes, are receiving the guidance and instructional support needed to make informed decisions and can access the GED® exam before the end of the year. We have monitored the availability of test seats at our 269 approved test centers and collaborated with test centers in the New York Metropolitan area, where demand is heaviest, to expand the capacity including significant financial support from New York City Department of Education (DoE). Nonetheless, it is unlikely that we have reached everyone impacted by these changes.

As the Board of Regents is aware, out-of-school youth and adults have a limited time and opportunity to earn a HSE diploma to support their post-secondary and employment goals. Unfortunately, the systems supporting these individuals lack the capacity and resources to fully deliver CCSS level curriculum and instruction at a pace needed to support full transition to the TASC even with a phased-in approach to increased rigor.

To better assure a seamless transition, we recommend that the Board of Regents allow, for a limited time, a passing score on one or more sub-tests of the 2002 GED® exam to be accepted as a passing score for the corresponding sub-test on any general comprehensive examination prescribed for the HSE diploma. For example, passing sub-test scores earned by taking the 2002 edition of the GED® exam would be accepted as a passing score on the corresponding sub-tests of the TASC administered on or after January 1, 2014 and before January 1, 2016.

The NYSED Office of State Assessment has endorsed this action as a policy decision that will not undermine the results. In addition, Daniel Lewis, Ph.D., Senior Research Manager at CTB McGraw Hill had this to say about grand-fathering 2002 GED® passing test scores: “There will be a concordance between GED® and TASC developed from the spring 2013 field test that will provide CTB with information with respect to the relationship between the GED® and TASC that may be useful in setting the TASC passing score. However, the grandfathering of passed GED® subtests (taken within a reasonable period of time) need not rely on that relationship; it can be established by policy alone. In fact, there may be justification to purposely *not* use the GED®-TASC concordance to support such policy. Differences between the TASC and GED® cut scores may be attributable to multiple sources including (a) differences in rigor between the TASC and GED® cut scores, (b) differences between the level of achievement of the 2002 GED® national norm group and the 2013 TASC national norm group, (c) differences in the content structure of the GED® and the common core structure of TASC, and/or (d) linking error in the GED®-TASC concordance which is established via the GED®-TABE and TABE-TASC links.”

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\* The Spanish version of the GED® exam was not administered until 2003.

### **Recommendation**

The Board of Regents should support grand-fathering passing sub-test scores from GED® exams taken in calendar years 2002 through 2013 to be accepted on any general comprehensive examination prescribed for the HSE diploma (e.g., the TASC) administered on or after January 1, 2014 and before January 1, 2016.

### **Timetable for Implementation**

A Notice of Proposed Rule Making will be published in the State Register on October 9, 2013 and public comment accepted for a 45-day period. It is anticipated that the proposed amendment will be presented for adoption at the December 2013 Regents meeting, with a January 1, 2014 effective date.

Attachment

AMENDMENT OF THE REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

Pursuant to Education Law sections 101, 207, 208, 209, 305, 308, 3204 and 3205

Paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of section 100.7 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education is amended, effective January 1, 2014, as follows:

(2)(i) In order to receive a high school equivalency diploma, candidates shall:

[(i)] (a) take [the] a general comprehensive examination prescribed for the program, in English, and achieve a standing designated as satisfactory by the Commissioner of Education; or

[(ii)] (b) take [the] a general comprehensive examination prescribed for the program in a language other than English and for those taking the examination on or after July 1, 1986, an English language proficiency examination designed by the commissioner, and achieve a standing designated as satisfactory by the commissioner in each examination, except that candidates who achieve a satisfactory standing only on [the] a general comprehensive examination may receive a high school equivalency diploma that bears an inscription indicating the language in which the general comprehensive examination was taken, and may exchange such diploma for a diploma not containing such inscription upon achievement of a satisfactory standing on the designated English language proficiency examination; or

[(iii)] (c) provide satisfactory evidence that they have successfully completed 24 semester hours or the equivalent as a recognized candidate for a college-level degree or certificate at an approved institution. Beginning with applications made on or after September 1, 2000 and before September 30, 2004, the 24 semester hours shall be distributed as follows: six semester hours or the equivalent in English language arts including writing, speaking and reading (literature); six semester hours or the equivalent

in mathematics; three semester hours or the equivalent in natural sciences; three semester hours or the equivalent in social sciences; three semester hours or the equivalent in humanities; and three semester hours or the equivalent in career and technical education and/or foreign languages. Beginning with applications made on or after September 30, 2004, the 24 semester hours shall be distributed as follows: six semester hours or the equivalent in English language arts including writing, speaking and reading (literature); three semester hours or the equivalent in mathematics; three semester hours or the equivalent in natural sciences; three semester hours or the equivalent in social sciences; three semester hours or the equivalent in humanities; and six semester hours or the equivalent in any other courses within the registered degree or certificate program.

(ii) Notwithstanding the provisions of clauses (a) and (b) of subparagraph (i) of this paragraph and subdivision (d) of this section, a passing score or scores on one or more of the sub-tests of such examination or examinations taken in calendar years 2002 through 2013 for the English version of the exam and 2003 through 2013 for the Spanish version of the exam may be accepted as a passing score on the corresponding sub-test or sub-tests of any general comprehensive examination prescribed for the program and administered on or after January 1, 2014 and before January 1, 2016.