



GED Option™ Guidelines for Implementation

These guidelines provide background and instructions for a jurisdiction Department of Education to request a waiver from the GED Testing Service to permit selected students who are still enrolled in secondary schools to prepare for the GED® test and to take the tests through Pearson VUE.

Background

Since its inception in 1942, the GED® Program has been a vehicle primarily to help adult learners who had left school without graduating earn their high school equivalency credential and prepare them for postsecondary education and employment opportunities. Since 1988, however, the GED Testing Service has recognized that the GED® Program can be valuable to certain students who are still enrolled in high school as a component of a dropout prevention program as a way to enable them to earn a high school credential and graduate during the same year as their high school classmates.

The GED Option program was designed to meet the needs of these students and has the following requirements:

- Students must
 - Be 16 years of age or older
 - Have credit deficiencies or at risk of dropping out of school so that the program provides them a valid second opportunity for students to complete high school with their peers.
- Programs must
 - Select students for participation using specific, academic performance-based (*not* demographic) criteria and
 - Support students with adequate instructional resources.

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Features of GED Option

GED Option is designed to be an integral component of a high school curriculum that provides another pathway to obtain a high school diploma. Specifically, GED Option is targeted to students who have the capabilities to complete high school requirements, but for a variety of obstacles are behind in the credits needed to graduate with their class and who are at risk of leaving school without a high school diploma. GED Option provides these students a viable second opportunity to stay in school and acquire the necessary high school level knowledge and skills to pass the GED® test and earn a high school diploma within the same as their peers. The table below summarizes the major features of the GED Exit Option

| GED OPTION | |
|--|---|
| IS | IS NOT |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS an approved option affiliated with the GED Testing Service LLC, and the jurisdictional Department of Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT an independent offering at unapproved or unaffiliated sites |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS a valid way to complete high school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT a punitive track for unsuccessful students |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS Voluntary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT Required |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS a screened-entry program using academic pre-testing to predict success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT an easy-access program for any level of academic performance |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS for students in jeopardy of not meeting or beyond original graduation date | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT an early exit from high school always prior to original graduation date |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS a credential-producing program upon completion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT certificate-producing program upon completion |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS content-substantive – aligned with high school course material | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT merely a test preparation course |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS a program that integrates counseling services: before, during and in transition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT a program that contains isolated, random contact with counseling services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS a program with quality, best practices instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT a program made up of packet-based performance instructional experience |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS a full-time high school program which may include workforce development courses/experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT a program based on only a test preparation schedule |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS an enriching alternative that provides closure and future direction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IS NOT a second-class option to finishing high school |

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Jurisdictions requesting waivers to implement GED Option must satisfactorily demonstrate the willingness and capability to conform to the GEDTS guidelines that define expectations related to student-focused activities—student selection, counseling, and instruction—and for program administration and GED® testing. The guidelines are intended to help a state implement the GED Option in a way that

- maintains the primary purpose of GED® test to measure academic proficiency of in school youth who have not completed high school
- supports the authority and flexibility of the jurisdiction to manage education programs in accordance with its legislation and policies;
- prohibits inappropriate tracking or assignments based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation; and
- prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities.

Guidelines/Best Practices for GED Option

In collaboration with participating jurisdictions, GEDTS has developed nine guidelines for implementing GED Option for selected secondary students enrolled in state approved high school completion programs.

- Six guidelines relate to instructional aspects of GED Option
- Three guidelines relate to administrative and testing issues.

The purpose of the guidelines is to:

- maintain the integrity and credibility of the GED® test for testing in school youth who are not high school graduates,
- provide jurisdictions the latitude and flexibility to meet their secondary students' needs,
- prevent inappropriate tracking or biased assignment based on demographic characteristics including but not limited to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation, and
- prevent discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities.

Each jurisdiction requesting a waiver to implement GED Option for selected students must provide written assurance in their applications that strategies they use in their programs will conform to these guidelines. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in cancellation of the jurisdiction's waiver to administer the GED Option to select secondary students.

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Guidelines for Instruction

| Instructional Guideline | Explanation/Requirements |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Student participation selection procedures should ensure that students who enroll in GED Option</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will not graduate with their class due to credit deficiency, and • are otherwise capable of completing graduation requirements. | <p>Indicators of a student’s ability to benefit from instruction and earn a GED® credential include, but are not limited to, scores from the GED Ready® Official Practice Test, a valid predictor of performance on the GED® test, or scores on other standardized tests that are aligned to the GED® test to indicate adequate ability.</p> <p>Selection procedures must be designed to preclude inappropriate assignment or tracking of students who have serious intellectual or social adjustment problems that would prevent them from obtaining the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the GED® test within a reasonable time frame. Qualified students who require accommodations should not be excluded. Those students with inadequate reading or math skills may not qualify for the Option program until after additional remedial help is provided. Entry and exit policies for GED Option must conform to state compulsory attendance legislation – the program shall not to be used to circumvent compulsory attendance regulations or facilitate an early exit (e.g., by students who wish to obtain a terminal credential in order to enroll in college). Preferably, students enter GED Option during the last year in which their cohort attends high school and do exit at approximately the same time as their cohort graduates.</p> |
| | <p>The state’s policy governing the selection process should include, at a minimum, specifications for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age of the participating student (e.g., the student must be at least 16, or as old or older than the minimum age for compulsory attendance). • Degree of credit deficiency (e.g., the student has achieved ninth grade status and his/her peers are in the twelfth grade). • Evidence of academic ability (e.g., Official GED Practice Test scores – with accommodations, if needed, grades, rank in class, or standardized test scores). • Procedures for involving teachers, administrators, and counselors in the decision. • Procedures for explaining the GED Option and expectations for student performance to the student and parent/guardian. • Procedures for obtaining written agreement from the student and parent/guardian for voluntary program participation. <p>If students are selected on the basis of these criteria, the risk of inappropriate tracking or biased assignment based on race, color, national origin, religion, and sex, or discrimination against qualified students with disabilities will be minimized.</p> |

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| Instructional Guideline | Explanation/Requirements |
|---|--|
| <p>2. Counseling is required prior to enrollment and must be available throughout participation in GED Option.</p> | <p>Counseling and advising services should be provided to both students and their parents/guardians because the decision to participate in GED Option is a serious one for the student. The decision to enroll should not be an automatic one based only on records or written criteria. Student motivation and needs also are critical factors to consider, because many of these students have encountered problems in relating to school requirements and persisting in the regular high school routine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should have access to certified counselors dedicated to GED Option or have ready access to the site-based counseling staff. • Pre-entry counseling must take place and should involve an administrator, teacher, and counselor as well as the student and parent/guardian. • Pre-entry counseling should include discussion of alternative education options available to the student and detailed explanation of the requirements and expectations of GED Option. • Academic, personal, and career guidance counseling should be provided as needed during participation in the program. • Counseling sessions with individual students should be available on a regular basis during participation in the program. • Counselors should maintain counseling records comparable to those maintained in other high school counseling. |
| <p>3. Curricula and instructional content must be at the high school level.</p> <p>See sample program below (*)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED Option should offer a full range of instruction that aligns with the core content measured by the GED® test. Content will align with high school mathematics, writing, social studies, reading, and science. • Content should be presented with some combination, including at least two of the following: instructor-prepared material, standardized GED® instructional materials from publishers, instructional materials from secondary school publishers and developers, or by some combination of the above materials. • Workforce development instruction and activities are directed at the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to secure and maintain employment. |

| Instructional Guideline | Explanation/Requirements |
|---|---|
| <p>4. Sufficient instructional resources and qualified staff must be allocated to GED Option to ensure effective instructional delivery.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction for GED Option must be of sufficient intensity and duration to ensure that the participating students have a fair opportunity to raise their skills to the level necessary to earn a high school diploma/credential in a reasonable period of time. Appropriate curriculum materials must be provided in adequate quantities and must be available when students need them. Given the needs and experiences of GED Option populations, instructional strategies that center on individual student progress should be employed. These strategies should include small instructor/student ratios, multimedia (e.g., text, computer, and video), and teaching methods that ensure that students are active rather than passive. • Students must have qualified instructors. • Students should participate in an educational program for a minimum of 15 hours each week, or, if greater, for the minimum number of hours allowed by state regulations to maintain full-time school attendance. The state's requirements for the minimum number of hours in a classroom setting vs. experiential training should be observed. • Diverse instructional delivery strategies should be employed, including, but not limited to small-group, one-on-one, and self-paced instruction. Computer-based, instructor-led, and peer instruction in different combinations are often appropriate. Use of different instructional media (computer, videotape, print, practical exercises) that enhance student interaction, "hands on" experience, and frequent feedback is expected. • A student/teacher ratio of 15/1 or smaller is strongly recommended. • Adequate supplies of textbooks, practice material, computers, shop/craft equipment, educational software, and videotapes that will support successful passing of the GED® tests are required. • Professional staff development related to GED Option instruction must be provided annually. |
| <p>5. Successful students must be awarded a High School Credential.</p> | <p>Students who successfully complete the GED Option requirements and pass the GED® test shall be awarded a High School Credential. It must be more than a certificate.</p> |
| <p>6. GED Option graduates should receive official recognition.</p> | <p>Students who satisfy all GED Option requirements should be given official school recognition of their achievement by participating in the high school graduation ceremony at or near the same time as that of their peers.</p> |

***Example High School level Instruction in a GED Option program**

Jurisdictions combine the GED® test with a number of High School level courses to create an individualized program for their GED Option students.

Example criteria for enrollment

- Initial Principal-Parent Student (PPS) meeting
- Student evaluation and/or assessment
- 7.5 grade equivalent or higher on a recognized standardized measure of reading achievement

Possible High School level courses

- Work hours
(e.g., 15 hours of work experience per week or a specific total of work experience hours for the program such as 650)
- Career portfolio (interest and aptitude inventory, applications, cover letter, resume, thank you note career research, etc.)
- Community service hours
- physical education
- State employability skills certificate
- Health and wellness project portfolio
- Work-based experience
- economics
- personal financial literacy
- computer science
- 30 hour community service learning project with a presentation to the school board
- Written budget
- Internet job search
- Job shadowing experience
- Career interview
- Career paper
- Complete at least one post-secondary entrance exam and application
- Read book (i.e., 7 Habits of Highly Effective People)
- 60 second self-advertisement
- Field trip to technical college or other post-secondary education institution or apprenticeship program
- Exploring career options and next steps
- Graduation project

Completion Requirements

- Passing the GED® test
- Successful completion of the career and technical component.
- Complete a financial literacy course

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Guidelines for Administration and Testing

To ensure effective executive management planning and oversight, GED Option must be integrated into the structure of the appropriate state agency(ies). GED Option entails specific GED® testing requirements and detailed instructional concerns that will require collaboration between the GED Jurisdiction Administrator and one or more divisions/offices. It is due to these requirements that a designated GED Option Coordinator is required.

| Admin Guideline | Explanation/Requirements |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Planning and oversight of the implementation of GED Option will be the responsibility of the state department of education or other appropriate state agency and will necessitate collaboration.</p> | <p>GED Option includes both instructional and testing components. Because these two functions typically are the purview of different state agencies, or different division/offices of a particular state agency, collaboration will be required to plan, administer, and monitor GED Option. In general, the testing component is the sole responsibility of the Jurisdiction GED Administrator and the instructional component is the responsibility of a jurisdiction GED Option Coordinator.” The GED Option Coordinator is a state agency staff member who has authority over educational programs that correspond to the mission of GED Option. The specific roles and responsibilities of the state agencies and the areas of primary responsibility and collaboration must be clearly defined in policies and procedures.</p> <p>The jurisdiction GED Administrator has sole responsibility for the oversight of the administration of the GED® tests. When students are enrolled in secondary schools, specific responsibilities of the GED Administrator include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All testing for GED Option participants within the state at a Pearson VUE Testing Center • Coordinating with GEDTS • Planning and coordinating with the GED Option Coordinator • Acting as a liaison between GEDTS and GED Option Coordinator <p>The GED Option Coordinator should have responsibility for ensuring that GED Option instruction is consistent with GEDTS guidelines and jurisdiction educational legislation and policies. This responsibility includes being the interface between the state agency and local educational agencies. As part of their responsibilities, the GED Option Coordinator should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate personally with local school system staff about the GED Option expectations and requirements • Receive, review, and approve applications from local school systems to implement GED Option; clarify requirements and advise schools as needed |

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| Admin Guideline | Explanation/Requirements |
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| <i>(continued)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance and support to local school staff pertaining to instructional practices, curriculum materials, and state educational requirements designed to enable students to pass the GED® test • Monitor local schools' implementation by personal communication and site visits • Help local school staff plan and complete data collection for GED Option. • Unblock students' accounts to test after appropriate eligibility paperwork has been received |
| | <p>While the specific responsibilities of the GED Administrator and the GED Option Coordinator will be defined by the policies and organizational structure of the state agency(ies), collaboration is expected to be required for the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the state agencies' criteria, application procedures, and related materials for local school systems to request permission to implement GED Option • Developing state GED Option monitoring and data collection plans (participating local schools and staff) • Developing procedures for scheduling testing of enrolled students at Pearson VUE Testing Centers • Representing the GED Option at the state department of education, other appropriate agencies, and to the media • Communicating with and responding to GEDTS on issues concerning the GED Option • Providing leadership to offer staff development on GED Option instruction for local school staff. |
| <p>2. The state agency(ies) will annually collect and analyze data and information about GED Option from local school systems to measure program effectiveness.</p> | <p>Jurisdictions need to decide what data to collect and analyze from their GED Option program at least annually in order to measure appropriate program implementation and effectiveness.</p> |
| <p>3. GED® test administration for GED Option must conform to all policies and procedures regarding the GED® test.</p> | <p>Instruction and testing must remain separate and GED Option instructors may not serve at Pearson VUE Test Administrators. GED testing procedures must conform in all ways to the policies of the GED Testing Service, as outlined in the GED Policy and Procedures Manual. Any failure to follow these policies will result in cancellation of the waiver to test enrolled youth.</p> |

Application for Jurisdiction to Establish GED Option

Before a jurisdiction can administer the GED® test to students enrolled in secondary schools, the Chief State School Officer (or Minister of Education) must request and receive permission to do so. The application is made through your State Relationship Manager.

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