



## GED Test and State Assessment Completion for High School Diploma

<b>Date</b>	June 27, 2008
<b>Number</b>	00068
<b>Request</b>	A state department of education (SDE) served by the Southeast Comprehensive Center has requested information about high school students who complete the General Educational Development (GED) tests and all the required state assessments. The SDE would like to know how many states are allowing these students to receive a high school diploma instead of a GED, thus increasing the high school graduation rates.
<b>Summary</b>	In response to this request, the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) contacted the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing (CRESST); and the United States Department of Education (ED). SECC also queried several state departments of education in the southeast region to obtain information on their policies for GED completion and attainment of high school diplomas. In addition, SECC used various Web search engines to locate information on this issue. The results are provided below.

### INTRODUCTION

According to ED, states are not allowed to include GEDs in their computations for high school graduation rates for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). For high schools, AYP is determined primarily by performance on a state assessment (administered between grades 10 and 12) and the graduation rate. However, the methodology used to calculate high school graduation rates varies from state to state as well as the policies governing GED completion.

In its 2005 report on state high school graduation data, the National Governors Association states that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) provides that states' calculations of their graduation rates must be based on "the percentage of students who graduate from a secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years." Regulations released by ED elaborate on the statute by providing that the percentage of students graduating must be measured from the beginning of high school and may not include an alternative degree that is not fully aligned with the state's academic standards, such as a certificate of completion or GED. However, the regulations also allow states to use "another definition, developed by the state and approved by ED, that more accurately measures the rate of students who graduate from high school with a regular diploma" (NCLB, 2001).

For example, in 2004, five states—Delaware, Kansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Washington—received approval from ED to modify their definitions of graduation rate to count as graduates students with disabilities who take longer than 4 years to complete high school consistent with a time frame provided for in their individualized educational plans (Erpenbach & Forte, 2005). To encourage schools to serve students who remain in school beyond 4 years,

Washington calculates a separate graduation rate that includes students who graduate in more than 4 years, and this rate may be used for AYP purposes. Both the on-time and extended graduation rates will be reported. (September 1, 2005, decision letter). The state also will report and use for accountability purposes dropout rates for high schools (those without a 12th grade) without the capability to graduate students (Education Commission of the States, 2008).

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM EDUCATION RESEARCH/EVALUATION RESOURCES AND ED

Based on SECC's query for information, Ron Dietel, EdD, assistant director for research use and communications, CRESST, contacted several individuals in the field of education research and evaluation (Ellen Forte, Pete Goldschmidt, Brian Gong, and Stanley Rabinowitz). Dr. Dietel indicated that none of these individuals was aware of any centralized reports or institutions that track information on states that allow GED students to obtain high school diplomas (R. Dietel, personal communication, June 3, 2008). However, two of his contacts (Forte and Goldschmidt) provided additional information, which is summarized below.

Ellen Forte, PhD, president of edCount, LLC, stated that, "It appears that there are generally restrictions in policy, and often statute, prohibiting GED students from earning a diploma by completing GED requirements and taking the test; they have to complete high school course requirements for which GED courses cannot be substituted. If they're thinking about this in relation to AYP issues, I would recommend that they first consider rethinking their AYP graduation rate target(s)."

Pete Goldschmidt, senior research/assistant professor, CRESST, University of California, Los Angeles, recommended a review of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) annual report of state requests related to NCLB. Upon review of this report, SECC found that there were no amendments related to allowing GED students to obtain high school diplomas (Erpenbach & Forte, 2005).

In addition, Dr. Dietel provided information from two state departments of education—Delaware and Indiana—which is discussed in the next section, summary of state policies regarding attainment of high school diplomas by GED students.

To obtain information on the topic from ED, SECC contacted the department's online support center. The response from the support center is summarized below (R. Gomez, personal communication, April 16, 2008). Although Mr. Gomez was not aware of any specific statistics related to the topic, he recommended several resources for additional information. He explained, "Education is a local and state responsibility, which means that each individual state develops and administers policies that govern education, including enrollment requirements, grading, standards and assessment, curriculum, and graduation requirements." Consequently, he suggested that SECC contact the individual state departments of education.

Mr. Gomez also recommended several Web sites and a press release containing information from Margaret Spellings, U.S. Secretary of Education. Secretary Spellings announced that she will take administrative steps to ensure that all states use the same formula to calculate how many students graduate from high school on time as well as how many drop out. Refer to this link for the press release: <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/04/04012008.html>

Based on the information provided by Mr. Gomez, SECC reviewed several ED Web sites, including the National Center for Education Statistics, and conducted an online search using ERIC but was unable to locate any additional information on the topic.

## SUMMARY OF STATE POLICIES REGARDING ATTAINMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS BY GED STUDENTS

To obtain specific information on state policies regarding the topic, SECC contacted the state departments of education for Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. In addition, CRESST provided information for Delaware and Indiana.

A review of the information provided by the states indicates that Florida is the only state—among those queried—that provides an option for GED students to obtain a standard high school diploma. Florida offers several types of diplomas, which include the following:

- Standard diploma
- Standard diploma using the GED Exit Option Model
- State of Florida Diploma (GED)

Detailed information on Florida’s diplomas and completion requirements is available on the Florida Department of Education Web site (FDE, 2008). A summary of the information collected from Florida and the other states is provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. State Policies Concerning GED Students’ Attainment of High School Diploma**

State	Response	Contact
Alabama	Alabama currently has a diploma that allows its students to complete all required coursework and the GED. It is called the Adult Alternate Diploma. This diploma is only for students at the end of the first semester of their senior year after they have <b>not</b> passed one or more of the five sections of the Alabama High School Graduation Examination. However, these students are not included in the diploma count. This diploma option is currently under review by the Alabama State Board of Education and may be withdrawn at the end of the 2007–08 school year.	Margaret Smith Career/Technical Education Alabama State Department of Education P.O. Box 302102 Montgomery, AL 36130 334.353.0777 msmith@ALSDE.edu
Delaware	Delaware’s GED and adult diploma programs are very different than its K–12 diploma programs. GED programs are only equivalent programs, and the end result is just an “equivalent” type of achievement. The adult education diploma program has standards that students must meet that are parallel to the ones that K–12 students are to meet in the core content areas.  Also, Delaware has developed an adult education assessment that is similar to that for K–12. The students in the adult education program are usually over the age of 18 and would not be able to finish a regular high school program before they age out. Delaware does not include adult education data in any NCLB-type accountability programs. The state’s adult education program has its own performance criteria upon which continued funding is based.	Robin Taylor Delaware Department of Education Assessment and Accountability Associate Secretary of Education John G. Townsend Building 401 Federal Street, Suite #2 Dover, DE 19901-3639 302.735.4080 rtaylor@doe.k12.de.us

**Table 1. State Policies Concerning GED Students' Attainment of High School Diploma**

State	Response	Contact
Florida	<p>A student who passes the GED receives the State of Florida High School Diploma. Currently, these students are included in the high school graduation rate. If a student is over age 18, he can take the GED tests upon request, without any educational preparation. However, these students would not be included in the graduation rate since they did not complete the state's academic requirements.</p> <p>A student participating in an approved GED Exit Option program that takes and passes both the GED and the Florida High School Competency Test can receive an earned high school diploma and is counted as a high school graduate. There is no coursework in preparing for the GED; it is a noncredit program.</p> <p>An additional option allows a student to participate in an Adult High School Program (also called adult secondary), which is a credit program, and after passing the Florida Competency Achievement Test (not the GED) earn a standard high school diploma.</p>	<p>Teresa Bestor            GED Chief Administrator            Florida State Department of Education            Office of the Commissioner            Turlington Bldg., Suite 1514            325 West Gaines Street            Tallahassee, FL 32399            850.245.9906            teresa.bestor@fldoe.org</p>
Indiana	<p>In Indiana, the GED and high school diploma paths are distinctly separate, by law. Although nothing prohibits a student from first earning a GED and then completing the diploma requirements, it cannot go the other way. Indiana's high school diploma requires that students pass both the graduation test and (at the state level) 40 credits, 24 of which are specifically named.</p> <p>The GED requires no specific coursework, and it cannot take the place of any of the diploma requirements. A student that successfully completes the GED tests receives a GED High School Equivalency Diploma.</p>	<p>Wes Bruce            Assistant Superintendent for Accreditation, Assessment &amp; Licensing            Indiana Department of Education            State House, Room 229            Indianapolis, IN 46204-2798            317.232.9050            wbruce@doe.in.gov</p>
Louisiana	<p>Louisiana does not award the Standard High School Diploma for students who successfully complete the GED. The state awards the Louisiana High School Equivalency Diploma to students who pass the GED, but they are not counted in the high school graduation rate.</p>	<p>Debi Faucette            Director, Family, Career and Technical Education            Louisiana Dept. of Education            Claiborne Building            1201 North Third Street            Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5243            225.342.3336            Debi.Faucette@LA.GOV</p>

**Table 1. State Policies Concerning GED Students’ Attainment of High School Diploma**

State	Response	Contact
Mississippi	Mississippi’s GED Options and Adult Basic Education programs only allow students to get the GED, not the diploma. The state’s GED students are counted as high school completers, not as high school graduates.	Sheril R. Smith Director, Office of Dropout Prevention Mississippi Department of Education 359 North West Street Suite 376 Jackson, MS 39201 601.359.3177 srsmith@mde.k12.ms.us
South Carolina	In South Carolina, some high school students may be working toward the GED examination while still in high school, but they will not be awarded a traditional high school diploma. If they take the GED examination, once they withdraw from high school, they will be awarded a GED diploma.	David Stout Director South Carolina Department of Education 1429 Senate Street Suite 402 Columbia, SC 29201 803.734.8347 dstout@ed.sc.gov

## REFERENCES

Education Commission of the States (2008). *State graduation rate goals for high school accountability*. Retrieved on June 27, 2008, from <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=865>

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Florida Department of Education (2008). *Florida Department of Education DOE information data base requirements—Volume 1: Automated student information system, automated student data elements*. Retrieved on June 26, 2008, from [http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database\\_0809/st80\\_1.pdf](http://www.fldoe.org/eias/dataweb/database_0809/st80_1.pdf)

National Governors Association (2005). *Graduation counts: A report of the national governors association task force on state high school graduation data—Redesigning the American high school*. Retrieved on June 6, 2008, from <http://preview.nga.org/Files/pdf/0507GRAD.PDF>

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Public Law 107-110, section 1111 (b)(2)(C)(vi); and 34 CFR Part 200 Title I—Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, Final Regulations section 200.19(a)(1).

**Rapid Responses** are customized reports that are prepared to fulfill requests for information by the departments of education of the states served by the Southeast Comprehensive Center at SEDL. The responses address topics on current education issues related to the requirements and implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. For additional information, visit the SECC Web site at [secc.sedl.org](http://secc.sedl.org).

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