



NEWS RELEASE

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More Seek Help for GED Test to Beat Unemployment Odds

In this tight job market, more Missouri adults without a high school diploma are realizing the value of a GED or General Education Development credential.

New unemployment figures released this month confirm that education has a significant impact on the likelihood of employment. December data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show the national unemployment rate at 10 percent, while the rate for people with less than a high school diploma is 15.4 percent.

“A quick look through the job postings on MissouriCareerSource.com reveals that having a high school diploma or GED would be extremely advantageous to jobseekers,” said Bill Poteet, director of GED testing for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or DESE. “In the past couple of years, many of Missouri’s GED testing centers have been reporting larger numbers of displaced workers wanting to take the GED test.”

While the number of Missouri adults taking the GED is up 6 percent in 2009, from 10,113 to 10,700, over the same period the pass rate declined statewide from 80 percent to 76 percent. So while 587 more people took the test in 2009 than in 2008, only 57 more passed it.

Ron Jewell, director of adult education at DESE, encourages adults interested in attaining their GED to take advantage of the free help offered at Missouri’s 44 adult education and literacy centers.

“These centers are proven resources for helping adults earn their GEDs,” he said.

The numbers back up his claim. The pass rate among GED test-takers enrolled in AEL classes was an impressive 89 percent in 2009, up 2 percent from 2008.

“Those who attend an AEL program are assessed to determine areas of academic deficiency and academic strength,” Jewell said. “Based on these results, students are provided the instruction and guidance needed to prepare for the GED test.”

Options include one-on-one help, class-based instruction, a GED Online Class and a DVD-based “GED Fast Track” program.

The Missouri Department of Higher Education reports that more GED graduates are attending college. The number of GED-holders going on to higher education in Missouri increased 12 percent from 2008 to 2009. This compares to an overall increase in enrollment of 8 percent.

MDHE spokesperson Jeremy Kintzel pointed out that GED recipients are eligible for both the Bright Flight and Access Missouri aid programs, so long as they meet all the requirements.

For more information on the GED and free preparation classes, visit DESE's Web site at www.ged.mo.gov.

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More information is available at http://dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm.

The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities. Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Neal Harrison.